

ABSTRACT

A STUDY OF CHURCH HEALTH AND GROWTH AT CREEKSIDE COMMUNITY CHURCH

by

Christopher Allen Jarrett

A shift is taking place in the world of church leadership. The shift is away from thinking about and planning for church growth to thinking about and working towards church health. The rationale behind that shift is that growth is a natural result of good health. Until recently, though, no objective, measurable way to determine the health of a church has existed. With the publication of Natural Church Development by Christian Schwarz, and his survey of eight healthy church quality characteristics, the health of a church can now be measured in each of these eight areas: empowering leadership, gift-oriented ministry, passionate spirituality, functional structures, inspiring worship service, holistic small groups, need oriented evangelism, and loving relationships

The purpose of this dissertation was to determine whether focusing on improving the health of a church does indeed lead to the growth of that church. The health of the church was measured using Schwarz's survey while data was gathered to measure its growth.

A relationship was established between church health and church growth. A positive correlation was expected but the negative corollary was the result: a decrease in health led to a decrease in growth. Other major findings include: (1) factors may exist that effect church health that the survey will not reveal, (2) the difference between stated and actual values; and (3) overarching problems within a church will have a "wet-blanket" effect on all efforts to improve church health.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

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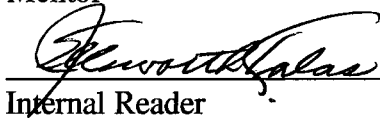
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Christopher Allen Jarrett

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CHAPTER 1

UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM

Background

Creekside Community Church was originally chartered as Eastland Pilgrim Holiness Church with its first worship service being held on 11 September 1966. The church was a member of the Pilgrim Holiness Church and owned four acres of property on the southeast side of Columbus, Ohio. The first church building was a colonial style house with a residence upstairs and sanctuary for worship downstairs.

In 1967 the church changed its name to Trinity Wesleyan Church due to the merger of the Pilgrim Holiness and Wesleyan Methodist churches, forming the Wesleyan denomination. Soon after the name change, the church began constructing a new church building on the property. It was completed the following year, and worship services were moved to and held in the new building.

Prior to 1990, four men served successively as the pastor of Trinity. In September 1990 Mark Cooper was called to be the pastor of Trinity Wesleyan Church. He had previously served as a senior pastor for four years in Allegan, Michigan. Worship attendance was in the forties when Cooper began his ministry at Trinity. The church had experienced some problems under the previous pastor. The morale of the church was very low, many people had left the church, and the district superintendent had suggested to Cooper that the church might end up closing its doors in the near future (Cooper 1).

During the fall of 1991 many improvements were made on the buildings and property: the gravel driveway and parking lot were asphalted, the parsonage was painted, landscaped, and a new roof was put on it; the church was carpeted, the pews were padded, and the sanctuary was given a face-lift, inside and out.

The worship services had a traditional Wesleyan format. Hymns with organ and piano accompaniment were the norm, along with frequent times of prayer around the altar, testimonies during the service, and altar calls almost weekly. Under Cooper's leadership the church continued to grow, and by 1993 over 150 were in attendance for worship services. A second service had to be added in order to accommodate everyone attending.

In 1992, at the invitation of some other pastors, Pastor Cooper attended a conference at Willow Creek Community Church in Barrington, Illinois. This visit was a life-changing experience for him. "Never before, of all the vast number of conferences that I had attended, was I so moved by the events of a conference. Attending the CLC [Church Leadership Conference] proved to be a time [of growth] for me personally understanding what a biblically functioning community was all about" (Cooper 1). Over the next couple of years Cooper began taking his lay leaders to conferences at Willow Creek. While the lay leaders would initially be excited by what they had seen, experienced, and learned, they would eventually become discouraged because Trinity was not following the Willow Creek model as much as they would have liked, and they saw little hope for change.

In 1993 several changes took place in the property of the church. The congregation had outgrown the current facilities and was looking for room to expand. The church bought at auction a small house that sat adjacent to the church building to the east. This building was then used for office space and a classroom. The church board also approved a housing allowance for the pastor. This allowed the pastor to move out of the parsonage, and the parsonage was then converted to a Children and Youth Center.

Small changes in the worship service were also happening, albeit slowly. The

worship team was beginning to introduce some more contemporary choruses into the worship service. This met with very little resistance. The choruses were just a supplement to the regular diet of traditional hymns and sung with the usual piano and organ accompaniment, so their addition was not a drastic or threatening change.

In 1995 the Church Board was continuing to discuss the need to expand the church facilities. The board hired an architect to draw up plans for an expansion on the current building. The estimated amount of the expansion was 1.2 million dollars, far outside the means of the congregation, so other options were considered. The leading option was an empty warehouse building that sat adjacent (to the east) to the small house the church had recently purchased. Over the next year, lengthy debates and discussions about the option of purchasing and moving into a warehouse were held. Concerns included the finances of the project, meeting in a building that did not look anything like a church, and what to do with the old church building (Cooper 2).

In October 1996, after attending another conference at Willow Creek, Pastor Cooper felt prompted by the Holy Spirit to take leadership in this venture and to push on with the purchase of the warehouse facility. A committee was formed, a plan was developed, the congregation approved the plan, financing was secured, and in June 1997 the church closed on the property. The church then raised \$70,000 in one month in order to purchase furniture and other necessary items for the new facility. While many members of the church were excited by the changes, others found the transition to the new building disheartening. Many had emotional ties to the old building, and for some, meeting in a renovated warehouse just did not seem like going to church.

With the move to the new worship center in the warehouse, more changes were made to the worship service. When the move was first made, the worship services were

still mostly traditional with a chorus or two included with the hymns and an occasional drama. Some of the changes that were being introduced included the intermittent use of a worship band as a part of the worship service, a worship team which led the singing, the occasional use of drama, and the use of a video projector for song lyrics and multimedia presentations. While some enjoyed the new format, many others were not happy with the changes. Pastor Cooper says they were “a congregation where no one was pleased. Some wanted the contemporary version and others wanted the traditional version and the more we tried to balance the two the more we realized that no one was being satisfied” (Cooper 2). People were beginning to drift away from the church.

In May 1998 Pastor Cooper took a team of key lay leaders to the Church Leadership Conference at Willow Creek. Cooper says that before that conference he was at his wits end. He knew what needed to be done at the church, the changes that needed to be made, but he did not have the support to do it. Attending the conference changed the tide of support. The group of lay leaders who attended the conference returned to Trinity with a new vision of what their church needed to be. The church board was unanimous in their support of converting Trinity to a completely contemporary, seeker-sensitive type of church. The church board had also been reading and discussing Rick Warren’s The Purpose Driven Church, and had caught much of their vision from that book. From June 1998 to May 1999 the church made the transition to being completely contemporary in worship style and seeker-sensitive in format.

In January 1999, in the middle of the transitional year, a dramatic, pivotal point of change occurred. The pastor and board decided that the time had come to stop trying to be both traditional and contemporary and to fully transition to the contemporary format. The result was that one Sunday the congregation arrived at church and found almost a

new church. The hymnals had been removed, the choir loft had been dismantled and replaced with the worship band, the cross was taken off the front wall of the church, and the name of the church had been officially changed to Creekside Community Church.

Cooper says that many people embraced the changes and were excited about what God was doing in their midst. They began to understand that the purpose of the church was to reach the lost, and that the use of drama, video clips, and contemporary music were just means to that end. For many people, though, the changes were just too much to handle. For some, the straw that broke the camel's back was the music style, for others it was the name change, for others it was the removal of the cross from the front of the sanctuary. No matter the reason, many people left the church, and Pastor Cooper received a tremendous amount of criticism and ill will.

While the church had done everything it could to adopt a new "seeker-sensitive" format, the one thing it was missing was seekers. After the transition was made, the attendance leveled off at just over one hundred and remained steadily there. The congregation that remained thoroughly enjoyed the new worship format, but had not fully grasped the new mission and vision of the church which was a focus on reaching the lost.

In the spring of 1999 Pastor Cooper began to feel that the Lord was releasing him from his ministry at Creekside; however, he decided to stay at Creekside one year longer to help improve the financial standing of the church. Part of that plan involved an organization called Purchase Plus. Jim Williamson, the vice-chairman of the Church Board worked for Purchase Plus and convinced Pastor Cooper that the company could help the church financially.

In short, Purchase Plus was a nationally marketed pyramid scheme, which, as all pyramid schemes do, focused more on recruiting others to participate than actually

selling or providing goods or a service. The program was presented as a means for people to make some money for themselves as well as donate a portion to the church. Pastor Cooper jumped eagerly at the opportunity and quickly began recruiting as many people from the church as possible. Many individuals and families trusted his leadership and became involved. A tremendous controversy arose within the church over involvement in Purchase Plus. Some said it would save the church financially; others said it would ruin it. Those who did not participate were very upset to see more cars in the church parking lot for the Sunday evening Purchase Plus rally/meeting than had been there for Sunday morning worship. Several families left the church in disgust.

For a while Purchase Plus and the individuals involved did well. Many people made lots of money through Purchase Plus and donated quite a bit to the church. However, in January 2000, Purchase Plus sent out a letter announcing that for various reasons they were having difficulty paying their distributors the returns that they were owed. Purchase Plus asked for patience, but people's patience was not rewarded. By February 2000 investors realized that Purchase Plus would be paying no further dividends. The result was that thousands of people across the country lost money. At Creekside, the same was true. Many people lost a couple thousand dollars, while a few lost tens of thousands of dollars. One older couple had invested their life savings and lost it all.

This was clearly a major blow to the individuals involved as well as the church as a whole. Those who had once been gloating about the money they had made were now heart broken, financially hurting, and embarrassed. Pastor Cooper continued to work to recruit others into the program to try and make up for his own financial losses. In March 2000 he announced his resignation as pastor of Creekside ending his ten years of ministry

at Trinity/Creekside.

Purchase Plus officially closed its doors in October 2000, ending people's hopes of ever receiving their money back.

In April 2000 I was finishing my year in the Beeson Pastor's Program at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky. That month, I received a phone call from Mike Donaldson, one of the Board members at Creekside. He was calling in response to an ad I had placed on Willow Creek's Exchange, an electronic bulletin board that posts church job openings as well as information on people seeking various church positions. Donaldson described Creekside to me and said that they were very impressed with my experience and credentials and wanted to know if I would be interested in interviewing with them for their senior pastor position. I said I would.

Due to previously arranged commitments, my wife and I did not visit the church until mid-May. I preached at their midweek service and was interviewed by the church board. At the end of May, after a relatively short candidating process, I accepted a call by the congregation to be the next senior pastor, beginning 9 July 2000.

Problem Formation

In the early 1990s, Creekside Community Church, then known as Trinity Wesleyan Church, came back from the very edge of extinction. The pastor had left in a scandal that resulted in the end of his marriage. Under new pastor Mark Cooper's leadership, the church rebounded well and grew to be a strong, healthy, traditional church.

The period from the fall of 1997 to the spring of 2000 had been hard on the church. During that time the church transitioned from being a very traditional Wesleyan Holiness church with a traditional style of worship to becoming a very contemporary

church with a new name, a new, contemporary style of worship, a new, very un-church-like facility, and a new mission and vision statement. Like a caterpillar entering a cocoon and reemerging as a butterfly, over that three-year period Trinity Wesleyan Church was completely refashioned and reborn as Creekside Community Church.

While in large part successful, the transition has not been without its problems and difficulties. The church lost many of its long-time members who were not in favor of all the changes that were being made. Some felt that they were forsaking their heritage, some did not enjoy the changes in the style of worship, and still others did not understand the new direction and vision of the church. During the transition, the worship attendance dropped from over three hundred on a Sunday morning to around one hundred. The majority of those who left were of an older generation.

During the transition, the giving at the church also declined. This was due partly to the reduced attendance but also due partly to people who were still attending but withholding their giving because they were not sure if they totally supported the new direction the church was heading.

The financial problem was compounded by the fact that the church had stretched financially as far as was possible to acquire the new facility, anticipating a jump in growth, attendance, and giving once they moved into the new building. These increases did not happen. In fact, due to the controversies involved with the move and the changes in style, mission, and vision, attendance and giving dropped. They were now a church of about one hundred supporting nearly a million dollars in debt.

The reduction in the church's finances led to a reduction in staff. Before the transition, the full-time staff included the senior pastor, an associate pastor, a building maintenance person, and a staff secretary. Part-time staff included a youth pastor, a

programming director, a worship leader, and a children's ministries director. During the transitional period, the associate and youth pastors each found new positions and were not replaced. The other positions were still in place, but the church was clearly running in maintenance mode.

At one point the church had a good network of small groups meeting. The associate pastor coordinated the small groups ministry. When she left, the small group program gradually died out until only a handful of the groups were still meeting.

The problem at Creekside Community Church is this: the church has a clear vision and mission and has suffered greatly to establish them. The church is small but has tremendous potential. The trials it has endured in the last three years have been many, and they have taken their toll on the church and on its people. When I interviewed at the church in mid-May 2000, I quickly became aware that the core of the church, the people in ministry and leadership positions, were tired, overextended, and greatly in need of some relief. The church was attempting to run the programs and ministries of a church three times its size (which it used to be) and doing so was running everyone ragged. I believed the overall health of the church was suffering, too. Morale was low, and the people who had stayed with the church through the changes really wondered what was in store for the church. Would it survive, much less thrive? So the need at Creekside was to help the church grow, to regain some of its previous glory, and to reestablish the morale and confidence of the people in themselves and in their church. Even more importantly, the need at Creekside was to help the church become healthy, and to help the congregation become a biblically-functioning community of believers who were reaching their full potential as individual believers and as a congregation.

Theological Foundation

With few exceptions, every pastor wants to see his or her church grow. They expect their churches to grow. Jesus' final command to his followers was to grow his church (Matt. 28:18-20). Hundreds of books have been written on the topic of church growth. Thousands of seminars have been held promising to deliver the key to church growth.

I have seen many pastors attend conference "A" and return to their churches convinced they have found the key to church growth. After a few disappointing months, they attend conference "C," after which they are sure they have now found the true key to church growth. Round and round they go, always searching for the one key, the magic solution, that will make their church grow.

Many pastors visit large, growing churches and try to determine what the secret is to the growth of these churches. The visiting pastor then attempts to transplant that special program, or style, or ministry into his or her home church, only to become frustrated when the program does not produce the same result he or she had seen in the other church.

Many church leaders have come to realize, therefore, that no single magic program will make any church in any place grow. In fact, forcing a church to grow seems impossible. So, more recently, the focus in churches and church growth literature has moved from church growth to church health. Health seems to be something we can work on and improve in our churches.

Jesus and the biblical writers over and again used metaphors for the Church that express its nature. The Church is viewed as the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12) and as his bride (John 3:29). The Church is also called a field (Matt. 9:38), a building (1 Pet. 2:5), a

vine (John 15:5), and a flock (John 10:16). In all of these metaphors, the Church is seen as a living organism (even the building metaphor is a living building), a work in progress with “living stones” being built into a “spiritual house” (1 Pet. 2:5).

Because the Church is seen as a living organism, it shares many of the same characteristics of living things. For example, it can be born, reproduce, be sick, be healthy, grow, decline, and die. The Church is a living, growing organism.

As Rick Warren, pastor of Saddleback Community Church in Orange County, California, notes, you cannot command a child to grow. If he or she is provided a healthy diet and plenty of sleep and exercise, growth is automatic. In other words, good health naturally leads to growth. Of course, the converse is true. If a child is chronically sick or malnourished, his or her growth is stunted. A lack of growth indicates the presence of disease of some kind or another (16).

Since the Church is a living organism, the same principles of health and growth we see in people and plants and animals should apply to the Church. This is what Christian Schwarz, the author of Natural Church Development, calls the “biotic principle.” Church growth cannot be manufactured. Instead, the church needs to minimize the obstacles to growth and allow growth to occur “all by itself” (10). If a church is healthy, it will grow. If it is riddled with disease and illness, it will stagnate and decline.

A key passage for Schwarz’s understanding of the church is found in Mark 4:26-29:

[Jesus] also said, “This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.”

Schwarz sees in this and other references to the biotic nature of the Church what he calls

“divine growth automatisms,”—that is, growth seems to happen all by itself, automatically, although we understand it is really the work of God. When the purposes and functions in a church are all alive and well in their expression, a synergistic effect is released and growth happens automatically, just as Warren has asserted. Therefore each church needs to focus on developing the characteristics of health. Schwarz contends that when these characteristics are present in a harmonious interplay, the biotic potential is released and God provides quantitative growth (Natural 10-14, 38).

Context of the Study

The location of the church and the demographics of the surrounding community played a significant role in the state of affairs at the church.

Location

Creekside Community Church is located in the southeast part of the city of Columbus, Ohio. While the church is within the city limits, it is located in a much more suburban-type environment. Creekside is in an area that is quite mixed in terms of its make-up and population. The fact that the church meets in a renovated warehouse gives a clue as to the make-up of the area. The area is a mix of light industry and commercial space, residential neighborhoods, retail stores, and shopping malls. Creekside is located on Refugee Road, a main east-west thoroughfare. Immediately to the east of the church is a Putt-Putt Golf amusement center and immediately to the west of the church is residential housing. About a mile east of the church is Eastland Shopping Mall, a large mall with several large anchor stores. The mall used to be the main shopping area for those living to the south and east of the city until Easton Mall was built further to the north several years ago. Eastland mall has been in a slow but steady decline since that time. The mall is surrounded by the usual assortment of restaurants and retail stores,

although several buildings and storefronts sit empty.

North of the Eastland Mall is Interstate 70, the main east-west freeway through central Ohio. Next to the highway is an enormous complex of grain silos that are still in operation and quite busy. Between the church and the mall are several warehousing facilities. Some are in use; some are available for lease or sale. Within a mile to the east or west of the church are a variety of businesses, including lumberyards, a driving range, several other churches, the previously mentioned warehouses, and several small strip malls. The areas to the north and south of the church are residential.

Demographics

The area around the church is also quite mixed demographically. A demographic report conducted for the church in February 1998 by Mission America Research shows that the area within a one mile radius around the church is 68.0 percent white, 30.0 percent African American, 1.3 percent Asian, and 1.2 percent Hispanic. The report also shows that within a five mile radius 21.8 percent of the population above the age of fifteen are married with children, 18.1 percent are married without children under the age of 18, 9.6 percent are single mothers, 1.0 percent are single fathers, 5.1 percent are single women, and 1.9 percent are single men. Educationally, the report shows that 14.2 percent of the population within a one mile radius of the church have not completed high school, 38.7 percent have a high school degree, 23.1 percent have some college education, 7.4 percent have an associate's degree, 12.0 percent have a bachelor's degree, and 4.6 percent have a graduate or professional degree. Occupationally, the report shows 25.0 percent of the population work in managerial or professional roles, 39.1 percent work in technical, sales, or administrative roles, 10.7 percent work in service-oriented jobs, 0.6 percent are employed in farming, forestry, or fishing, 11.2 percent work in areas of

precision production, craft, or repair, while the remaining 13.4 percent are operators, fabricators, or laborers.

Several other churches are in the immediate area around Creekside. Two churches are within half a mile to the east of the church. A third church has purchased property in that same area and is preparing to build a new facility. To the west are four churches within half a mile of Creekside including one that meets in Creekside's old building and one that just opened a beautiful, new, large multimillion dollar facility. Without exception, every one of these other churches is predominately African American. Creekside is predominately a white-Anglo Saxon church with some African Americans and Asians.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to assess Creekside Community Church's health and growth and then determine whether a strategic effort to increase the church's health (quality) in terms of the eight quality characteristics (see Definition of Terms) will result in an increase in the church's growth (quantity). A related area to be explored is which of the quality characteristics can be most closely tied to church growth.

Research Questions

The following research questions are addressed in this study.

Research Question 1

What is the current health of the congregation in terms of the eight quality characteristics defined by Schwarz and what effect will the strategic process of attempting to increase the health of the church have on its growth?

Research Question 2

Which of the quality characteristics appear to be most closely associated with

church growth?

Definition of Terms

The following are key terms used throughout the course of this dissertation.

Natural Church Development (NCD)

Natural Church Development (NCD) is an approach to church growth based on the premise that God causes the growth and that all human endeavors should be focused on releasing the “divine growth automatisms” by which he grows his church. Christian Schwarz discovered these principles through empirical research, by observing nature, and by studying Scripture (Natural 13).

Growth Automatisms

Christian Schwarz’s term for the “all by itself” biblical principle is best illustrated in Mark 4:26-29. In this parable, the sower casts the seed and goes to bed; the seed sprouts and grows—how, the sower does not know. The earth appears to produce the crop *by itself*. The key Greek term is *automate*, literally meaning “automatic.” Schwarz applies this idea to the life of a congregation by saying that it indicates that certain developments appear to happen “all by themselves,” or “automatically.” NCD begins with the premise that these developments are the work of God.

Eight Quality Characteristics

Eight aspects of church health, when taken together, can be used to diagnose the health of the church. The survey conducted by Christian Schwarz’s Institute for Natural Church Development identified these eight aspects as: empowering leadership, gift-oriented ministry, passionate spirituality, functional structures, inspiring worship service, holistic small groups, need-oriented evangelism, and loving relationships. Harmonious, balanced interplay among all eight quality characteristics is the key to church growth.

Maximum Factors

The strongest quality characteristics, measured on a scale of one to one hundred, are the maximum factors. NCD's strategy involves using these to improve a church's minimum factors.

Minimum Factors

The weakest quality characteristics, measured on a scale of one to one hundred, are the church's minimum factors. NCD pictures them as the shortest staves of a barrel that hinder quantitative growth in the same way that short staves on a physical barrel set the upper limit for the amount of liquid it will hold.

Growth

Growth refers to an increase in the measurable numeric factors in the church including attendance at worship services, Sunday school, and small groups, as well as giving, conversions, baptisms, and such.

Health

Health is defined negatively as the lack of sickness or disease and positively as the balance or "harmonious interplay" of Schwarz's eight quality characteristics.

Description of Project

The goal of this project was to assess whether increasing Creekside Community Church's health, its quality, will also increase its growth, its quantity. The project planned to use pre-, mid-, and posttest surveys to measure the eight quality characteristics of church health identified by Schwarz's Institute for Natural Church Development. As previously noted these are

1. empowering leadership,
2. gift-oriented ministry,

3. passionate spirituality,
4. functional structures,
5. inspiring worship services,
6. holistic small groups,
7. need-oriented evangelism, and
8. loving relationships.

The first survey was administered to thirty key lay people of Creekside Community Church and the senior pastor in early October 2000. When the results were tabulated, a strategy was devised to increase the overall health of the church in terms of the eight quality characteristics using the Implementation Guide to Natural Church Development by Christian Schwarz and Christoph Schalk.

While working on increasing all eight quality characteristics would have been ideal, that would have been both unrealistic in scope and impractical in practice. The two quality characteristics that were the lowest were the focus of the project, and a task force was formed to work on improving those characteristics. The job of the task force was to brainstorm ideas and then implement those deemed most useful and practical in an effort to improve the health of the church in the designated areas.

After eight months, in late May 2001, a second survey was completed by the same leader-participants who completed the first survey. This second snapshot revealed an increase, decrease, or stability in each of the eight characteristics as compared to the initial survey.

After four more months, one year after the initial survey, a third survey was planned to be completed by the same leader-participants who completed the first two surveys. This third snapshot was to reveal further increases, decreases, or stability in the

eight quality characteristics as compared to the second survey. This survey did not take place, for reasons that will be explained in Chapters 4 and 5.

Throughout the time frame of the project, the task force worked to increase the health of the two minimum factors. Speculating on what this process might have looked like was difficult not knowing which factors would need attention and the different approaches one might take with each characteristic. For example, if small groups had been a minimum factor, then a comprehensive program to highlight the importance of small groups, including sermons, testimonies from participants, invitations to attend, and a small group “fair” to give further exposure to the groups, their participants, and leaders might have been in order. Similar programs could have been designed for any of the characteristics, but that was up to the task force to determine.

Throughout the course of the study, data was gathered from church records regarding information on worship attendance, Sunday school and children’s church attendance, membership, conversions, baptisms, and giving. This information was used to determine the numeric rate of the growth of the church at the time each survey was given. A comparison of the relative rates of growth as indicated by the church data and the degree of church health as indicated by the surveys provides the answers to the research questions.

Population and Sample

The population of the survey was the congregation of Creekside Community Church. The sample for this study included thirty members of the church’s leadership community in addition to the senior pastor. The leadership community consists of those serving on primary boards and committees of the church and those overseeing various ministry teams in the church. The participants in the survey were selected to represent a

cross section of the congregation with regard to length of time with the church, age, race, gender, and previous experience with other churches.

Methodology

In early October, I gathered thirty members of the leadership community of the church and together we completed the Natural Church Development Survey for the first time. The completed surveys were returned to ChurchSmart Resources in Naperville, Illinois, for scoring and evaluation.

Based on the results of the survey, a task force from among the leadership community of the church was formed to create a strategy to increase the overall health of the church, focusing on the two characteristics that scored the lowest (our minimum factors).

After eight months, in late May 2001, the leadership community and I again came together to repeat the NCD Survey. During the summer months, no specific treatment was planned to be given to improve the health of the church in terms of the eight quality characteristics, although normal operations of the church continued. The NCD survey was planned to be repeated for a final time one year after the initial survey, in early October 2001.

Variables

Improvement in church health, as defined by the eight quality characteristics, is the dependent variable. Improvement (or lack of it) will be indicated by the variation in score (between one and one hundred) from the results of the first survey to the second and the second survey to the third. An increase in overall health was the goal of the study. The independent variables are the treatments that will be implemented between the first and second surveys.

Instrument

The instrument for the survey conducted at the beginning, middle, and end of the project was the Natural Church Development Questionnaire developed by Christian Schwarz and Christoph Schalk (see Appendix A).

Data Collection

The NCD Survey is a ninety-one question survey on four pages completed with a pencil (see Appendix A). It was administered in a group setting in early October 2000, again in late May 2001, and planned to be administered again in early October 2001.

Generalizability

The findings of the study have direct implications for Creekside Community Church. Generalizations about other churches can only be made with caution. This study adds one church's one-year experience to ChurchSmart's pool of research.

Limitations

This study focuses on the health of Creekside Community Church from September 2000 to July 2001. The study measures church health indicators as opposed to growth indicators, with the expectation that qualitative health eventually results in quantitative growth. Unusual problems in the setting are reflected in both the health and growth of the church. These problems and the results of them are addressed in Chapters 4 and 5. Assessments were limited to the thirty church leaders and the senior pastor who were deemed to be the most knowledgeable about the inner life of the church and most invested in efforts to improve church health.

Overview of the Dissertation

Four chapters follow this one. Chapter 2 establishes the biblical and theological foundation for this study, as well as presents the eight quality characteristics found in

Natural Church Development. Chapter 3 presents the research design, methods, and data analysis. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study. Chapter 5 presents interpretations and conclusions of the research findings.

CHAPTER 2

THE REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

A study to describe the relationship between church growth and church health calls for the exploration of several issues in the literature review. A biblical understanding of the church must be the guiding principle for the study of church health. In the church health movement, wholeness is what is looked upon as being a healthy church. A biblical understanding of what a healthy church looks like must begin in the book of Acts. I will review the nature of the church, the *ekklesia*, as presented in the book of Acts, with specific attention given to Acts 4:32-35 as a model of a healthy church.

Next, using a brief scan of church history, I will seek to lay the groundwork for the modern church growth movement. Historic and contemporary models of church life will be explored in relationship to church growth and health. Next, the modern church growth movement will be examined along with the ensuing transition to the church health movement. Various perspectives on what makes a church healthy will also be explored. Finally, I will conclude with an examination of each of Schwarz's eight quality characteristics.

Limits to the Review of the Literature

The New Testament, especially the book of Acts, presents an enormous amount of material related to the Church, its nature, its mission, and so forth. For the purpose of delimitation, the review will focus briefly on the nature of the Church as presented in Acts, and then specifically Acts 4:32-55.

Due to the need to focus the study, the vast field of church growth material will be mentioned only briefly. The church growth movement has laid a foundation for the study of church health; therefore, a number of the concepts of key thinkers in the church growth

field will be reviewed for this study. However, the larger body of church growth material itself will not be reviewed.

The views of one particular church health scholar will be examined in some detail. Christian Schwarz's Natural Church Development, with its eight quality characteristics, has proven to be foundational in the church health movement. The concept of church health as portrayed by Rick Warren in The Purpose Driven Church will also be explored in more detail. The views of other church health authors surveyed will include Macchia, Hemphill, and Logan.

Finally, entire bodies of literature exist for each of the eight quality characteristics. This study will be limited in the exploration of each of these eight characteristics compared to the amount of literature available.

The *Ekklesia* as Presented in Acts

Before looking at the *ekklesia* as presented in Acts, we must first examine the historical significance of the term. From the fifth century BC onward, the term *ekklesia* was used by the Greeks to denote an assembly of the full citizenship of a city, or *polis*. The *ekklesia* were those "called out" (from the verb *kaleo*) and called together. The term was also used to refer to an assembling of military forces. Thus, the *ekklesia*, before adoption of the word by New Testament followers of Christ, was a political event, an assembly of citizens pursuing a democratic society during which political and judicial decisions were made. From the first, *ekklesia* was secular in usage and connotation. *Ekklesia* was never used, before New Testament times, to connote a religious gathering, and only three rare occurrences have been found where *ekklesia* was used to describe the business meetings of a cultic guild (Brown 292; Kittell 513).

Another term that merits a brief review is *synagoge*, which derives from the root

word *synago*, “to bring together.” Originally *synagoge* had a wide scope of use. It could be used to indicate a gathering of any type of things (a collection of books, possessions, produce, and such) or persons (civilian or military). It found its specialized and defined usage by the second century BC and was used for religious gatherings especially those including a meal and sacrifice. This was further defined and *synagoge* became synonymous with community of those who follow Yahweh, the Jews. *Synagoge* also became a term that served as a reminder of the great events in the salvation history of the Jews and of the promises to Israel.

What is interesting is the choice the early Christians made as to what to call themselves. The obvious choice for the early church would have been to use *synagoge*, given the Jewish roots of the Church. The early Church, though, conspicuously avoided using *synagoge* to describe itself. The *synagoge* had come to represent not only the Jewish community or a particular congregation but Jewish tradition and an adherence to the Law, which was a connotation the early Church probably sought to avoid. In fact, the gospel centers on a freedom from the Law and salvation that only comes through faith in Christ, which would be in stark contrast to the beliefs of the *synagoge*.

While the early Church did not use the word *synagoge* to describe itself, neither did it use the term *ekklesia* until after the death and resurrection of Jesus. In fact, with the exception of Matthew 16:18 and 18:17, the word *ekklesia* does not even appear in the gospels. Luke, though, uses the word twenty-three times in Acts which suggests that Luke conscientiously avoided calling the disciples who met during Jesus’ earthly ministry the *ekklesia*. Paul is responsible for the majority of the use of *ekklesia* in the New Testament, but all of the early Christian writers reserve the use of the word *ekklesia* to refer to the fellowships of the Christians after the death and resurrection of Jesus.

So why did the early Christians choose to call themselves the *ekklesia* rather than the *synagoge*? As previously noted, *synagoge* carried with it a great deal of meaning and connotation from which it would be very difficult to disassociate and with which the early Christians did not wish to be associated. While *ekklesia* did have secular connotations, it also had a central meaning with which the early Church did associate, being “called out.” The early followers of Christ had been called out by God for salvation through faith in Christ, and they had also been called out of the world, set apart to live a different kind of life as a witness to their Lord.

In Acts, *ekklesia* is used to describe the Church on two different levels. First, the Church is seen as a particular group of Christians living in a particular time and place. This is what we might call a congregation. Examples include the *ekklesia* in Jerusalem (5:11; 8:1; 11:22; 12:1), the church in Antioch (13:1), and other places Paul visited (14:23; 15:41; 16:5). Second, the *ekklesia* is seen as the totality of those who follow God through faith in Christ. This is what we think of as the universal Church. Although the *ekklesia* always meets in a particular time and place with a certain number of believers present, at the same time the sense of the totality of the Church is always there. “Each community, however small, represents the total community, the Church” (Kittle 506). The key is not the quantity of believers present (which is the key in the secular use of *ekklesia*, the gathering of the citizens), but the presence of the One who calls them together. The presence of the Spirit of God makes the *ekklesia* the *ekklesia*. “For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them” (Matt. 18:20). In fact, the only attribute or qualifier added to the nature of the Church (if it can even be called such) is that it is the *ekklesia tou theou*, the Church (or congregation) of God. The Church is always God’s Church. This wording occurs in Acts only in verse twenty-eight of chapter

twenty, but Paul develops the concept throughout his letters (1 Cor. 1:2; 11:16; 2 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:13; 1 Thess. 2:14; 2 Thess. 1:4).

Another interesting point that does not rise directly from studying Acts but is related to the previous point and is pertinent to this subject is that *ekklesia* is often used by Paul to describe fellowships that occur in homes. A group of Christians as small as might meet in a house church is still called an *ekklesia* (Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15; Philem. 2). Again we see that quality, not quantity, is the key. What counts is the presence of Christ among those gathered whether the group be large or small. A small church (or small group) that meets in a home is still a church and part of the Church (Matt. 18:20).

Acts 4:32-35 as a Model of Church Health

In Acts 4:32-35, Luke pauses in his narration of the amazing growth and action in the early Church to give us a brief description of what life was like among the community of believers. As we shall see, much of Luke's description is just that, descriptive, not prescriptive. Luke is not attempting to give us an outline for how the church, or a local congregation, should be structured nor how all believers should always conduct themselves. What he is doing is describing some of the practices of the booming early Church—both the source of their growth and how they coped with the tremendous growth they were experiencing. From this passage we can glean some principles of church health from what is obviously a very healthy church. From my studies, I believe four principles characterized this healthy, young church.

A Spirit of Unity

The first characteristic we see in the church in Jerusalem is a spirit of unity among them, "All the believers were one in heart and mind" (Acts 5:32a). The young church had

experienced a growth spurt from a dozen or so to three thousand and then to five thousand (Acts 2:41; 4:4) in a very short amount of time. While unity of spirit of any group larger than an individual is notable, a spirit of unity in a group so large and recently convened is quite remarkable (Kistemaker 173; LaSor 69; Williams 92)!

Luke describes their unity as being of “one heart and mind.” This is a typically Hebrew phrase, occurring often in Deuteronomy, “indicating their complete accord” (Williams 92). First, the early Church had a unity of “heart.” The Bible uses the word “heart” to indicate the very source or fountain of our being. It is the place where we connect with God and he with us and which determines our actions. Our heart is our deepest inner spirit. Thus, a foundational unity existed among the early believers in Acts. Second, the early Church had a unity of “mind” or “soul.” The believers had a unity of mental focus. As the unity of their hearts permeated their lives, it gave unity to their thoughts and to the direction of their lives (Hughes 68).

Luke’s use of this phrase brings together two different worlds of thought. First, Luke is probably referring to the Greek ideal of friendship (Powell 77; Larkin 82; Gillman 96). A proverb from before the time of Aristotle says “friends are one soul” (Gillman 96), and another that states the Greek ideal of friendship as “a single soul dwelling in two bodies” (Larkin 82). Thus, Luke is saying that the Christians in Jerusalem were fulfilling the Greek ideal of friendship. His Gentile readers would have immediately recognized the Greek ideals which they had been taught. Moreover, “what they esteemed as an ideal had become a reality in the young Christian community” (Polhill 152). Second, Luke ties in the Old Testament idea of total loyalty to friends (1 Chron. 12:39) and to God (Deut. 6:5; 10:12). Thus, Luke appeals to both the Hellenistic traditions which surrounded the early Church and the Hebrew roots from which it grew.

This unity of spirit almost certainly does not mean that the believers saw everything eye to eye. Unity does not mean we all become carbon copies of each other with identical ideas, styles, hopes, dreams, likes and dislikes. In fact, just the opposite is true. God created each person to be a unique individual to whom he gives a unique personality with his or her own gifts, graces, and abilities. To demand that unity means that every believer will conform to a certain way of thinking, dressing, acting, and expressing his or her personhood is absolutely contrary to the message of the Bible. “One of the wonders of Christ is that he honors our individuality while bringing us into unity” (Hughes 69). The unity that the early Church experienced was due to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in their midst and their recognition of “one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all” (Eph. 4:5-6; Gillman 97; Williams 92).

Boundless Generosity

The second characteristic we see in the young church in Jerusalem is their boundless generosity.

No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need. (Acts 4:32b, 34-35)

The spirit that permeated this church was not just one of unity but also of incredible generosity. An atmosphere existed that said, “We care about each other.” When someone had a need, another person would step forward to help meet that need. This was a voluntary, heartfelt response to those in need (Hughes 71; Williams 92).

This brings us to an interesting debate about this passage. For years some commentators and theologians have said that what we see here is a clear case of Christian communism. They argue that this is a society in which private property is abolished,

redistribution of wealth was practiced, and all shared equally in the community of goods (Carter and Earle 67). This, though, is clearly not what Luke was describing at all! Luke is describing a community in which “everyone is concerned about everyone else and willing to part with their possessions on behalf of others when the need requires” (Powell 78).

What the early Church was practicing was *koinonia*, fellowshiping together, caring for one another, and caring for each others’ needs, all under the umbrella of the love and grace of Jesus. While *koinonia* and communism may have a foundational idea in common, they quickly go in opposing directions. LaSor describes the difference well: “Communism says ‘What is yours is mine; I’ll take it.’ *Koinonia* says, ‘What is mine is yours; I’ll share it’” (71).

This is voluntary sharing of possessions, not the abolition of ownership. One of the keys to understanding this passage is to note that every verb in this passage, five of them in all, are in the imperfect tense. The verbs are describing a repeated, continuing, or customary action. This is not a once and for all liquidation of possessions and a complete redistribution of wealth. Rather the believers sold their land or houses bit by bit as needs arose (Carter and Earle 67; Williams 93-94; Stott 107). The apostles did not advocate the elimination of private property or ownership and did not require anyone to sell all they had and give to the poor. Instead the Christians in Jerusalem practiced the principle of voluntary giving to support the needs of those in their midst who were less fortunate. This is even in contrast to the Essenes who required members of their community to sell all they had and share all their goods. The Christians, on the other hand, acted out of love for their fellow persons, not compulsion of law (Kistemaker 173; Williams 92; Polhill 153; Witherington 205).

The two stories that follow lend credence to this view. Luke presents a good example followed by a bad example. The good example is Joseph from Cyprus, also known as Barnabas. He sold a field that he owned and laid the money at the apostles' feet to distribute as they saw fit (Acts 4:36-37). This man's actions are notable to be singled out by Luke and recorded for posterity and as an example of generosity and a life that is directed by the Spirit. Barnabas' actions are contrasted with the actions of Ananias and his wife Sapphira. The two stories are linked with a "but" that usually goes untranslated. Ananias and Sapphira apparently do the same as Barnabas. They sell a field and lay the money at the apostles' feet. When questioned about the money, though, they are struck dead. Their sin was not that they did not bring all of the money to the apostles—Peter tells Ananias that the property was his to do with as he wished, as was the money he made from the sale of the property. The sin of Ananias and Sapphira was their lack of integrity and that they lied about how much they made (Larkin 84; Gillman 98; Polhill 156; Stott 109; Witherington 215).

The real emphasis that Luke puts in this passage is "the ongoing charity that is expected to remain a part of Christian community always and everywhere" (Powell 78). Luke did not expect to be giving a prescription for all Christian communities to practice a communal style of living. Luke is simply describing the incredible generosity that existed in the early Church that responded to needs as they arose. This is not communism but the love of Christians in action (Carter and Earle 67; Stott 107). This sharing of possessions "is an outward manifestation of unity and caring within the community. Furthermore, placing one's possessions in common symbolizes the unanimity of mind and heart created by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit" (Gillman 97).

This outpouring of the Holy Spirit was also adding significantly to the number of

people who were coming to faith in Christ, which, in turn, added to the number of needs that the Christians desired to meet. Earlier, needs could be addressed in a one on one manner, rather ad hoc, as seen in Acts 2:44. Although the number of Christians was large, no organized system of caring for these concerns existed. In 4:34-35 though, we see a well-planned system for caring for needs. First, land or homes were sold only when a need arose. Second, the believers had established a fund for meeting these needs. Third, the apostles were charged with and trusted with the task of distributing the funds as they saw fit (Kistemaker 174; Gillman 96-97; Williams 94). As the number of needs grew, the believers developed a system which insured that needs were met in a timely, appropriate manner. This is the boundless generosity of the early Church.

Bold Witness

The third characteristic we see in the early Church is their bold witness to the resurrection of Jesus. “With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 4:33a). The apostles had been promised by Jesus that they would receive power to do their work (Acts 1:8), and now they were boldly proclaiming his life and resurrection with bold, powerful, convincing speech (Barrett 254; Kistemaker 174; Hughes 71).

Their preaching was indeed bold because earlier in chapter four Peter and John had been seized in public, thrown in jail overnight, and then made to appear before the Sanhedrin the next day. After being questioned, Peter and John responded boldly to the Sanhedrin, who, after some consultation, sent them off with a strict warning not to speak or preach about Jesus under threat of punishment (4:1-22). In chapter five, the apostles are again arrested, jailed, questioned, and this time flogged, and again ordered not to speak in the name of Jesus, although the apostles leave rejoicing that they were counted

worthy to suffer for Christ. The threats against them were real, as were the punishments they received for preaching about Jesus. Nonetheless, the apostles boldly proclaimed what they knew to be the truth about the resurrection of Jesus.

The apostles had been eyewitnesses to the resurrection of Jesus. They had seen him, spoken with him, eaten with him, touched him, and seen him taken up into heaven. As an act of obedience to his command to be his witnesses in Jerusalem and on to the ends of the earth, they were compelled out of love and loyalty to share what they knew to be the truth (Kistemaker 174; Williams 93). Even the threat of punishment, prison, and death could not quiet their voices, and their witness was one with great power, power that was the result of the filling of the Holy Spirit in their lives (Acts 1:8; 2:4). Their words were both convicting and convincing, which is attested to by the thousands who came to faith in Jesus as a result of their preaching (2:41; 4:4).

Abundant Grace

The fourth characteristic we see in the early Church is God's abundant grace poured out on them. "And much grace was upon them all" (4:33b). Some debate among commentators exists over whether this verse describes the general public's "favorable impression of the Christian community" (Kistemaker 174), or that "God's grace was sustaining them" (Stott 107). While the former may be true, the majority of commentators hold to the idea that Luke is referring to the latter (e.g., Williams; Barrett; Hughes; Larkin; Polhill). God was blessing their lives and their ministry, and it showed through lives that were being changed by the gospel of Christ and needs that were being met through the generosity of the believers. The whole congregation, the whole body of believers, was experiencing the grace of God in their lives. God's power, God's grace "makes the church effective in witness and in depth of fellowship" (Larkin 82).

God's grace is his gifts and favor granted to those who do not deserve it. Jesus came to minister to an empty, hurting people, and he poured out his grace upon them. "We are saved by grace, healed by grace, nurtured by grace" (Hughes 70). Here in Acts the early Church is experiencing God's grace in unusual measure (Barrett 254). The number of those who are experiencing God's saving grace is exploding, while his healing grace and nurturing grace are being poured out in equal abundance. The apostles have a tremendous healing ministry (Acts 3:1-10; 5:12-16), and people are being cared for and having their needs met through the loving care and nurture of fellow believers. All of this is possible only by God's grace poured out on all the believers and the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit in all of their lives (Williams 93).

So, here we have an excellent model of a healthy church. The church in Acts is filled with the power and grace of God. All of the people are experiencing God's grace and favor in their lives, especially as they generously meet the needs of their fellow believers in Christ. The apostles are overseeing the distribution of funds to care for the needy, but are also carrying out their primary task of boldly sharing the good news of Christ and bearing witness to his resurrection. The whole church is enjoying a unity of spirit and mind that can only come through the indwelling of and sensitivity to the Holy Spirit. This is a vibrant, growing, alive, healthy church. The people are not focused on merely growing but on fulfilling what Christ has called them to do in a balanced, healthy way, and the result is booming growth.

Models of Church Life

Several models of church life exist and call for brief examination.

Avery Dulles' Models

Avery Dulles, in Models of the Church, follows the church's development

through six different models. While his study follows the development of the Roman Catholic church, the models he develops are not exclusive to the Catholic church.

The first model, the Church as *institution*, is purely hierarchical. All power and authority flows through the hierarchy of the Church. This model reached its culmination in the second half of the nineteenth century.

As the institutional model was declining, the second model, the Church as *mystical communion*, was gaining priority. This model developed as an attempt to return to the biblical and patristic sources. The emphasis in this model is on the Holy Spirit and gifts and graces that he gives.

The third model, the Church as *sacrament*, was an attempt to synthesize the first two models. This model appeared in the early twentieth century. The human and divine components are combined, not treated separately. Christ is the sacrament of God, and the Church, in turn, is the sacrament of Christ, which continues Christ's work in the world. The liturgy in worship is given precedence.

The fourth model, the Church as *herald*, focuses on the Church's calling to proclaim that which it has heard and believed. Proclamation takes precedence over mystical communion and interpersonal relationships. Karl Barth, a protestant, championed this model of the Church beginning in 1948.

The fifth model, the Church as *servant*, emerged in the 1960s. The emphasis of this model is that the Church exists to serve others. The Church must help in meeting basic human needs and should sell all its property in order to help meet those needs.

The Church as the *community of disciples* is the sixth model. Beginning in the 1980s, this model brings together elements from each of the previous five models while stressing that the Church needs to see itself in contrast to the non-Christian world.

Church Growth Movement

Donald McGavran is considered to be the father of the modern church growth movement. His parents were missionaries to India, where he was born. McGavran published his first book, The Bridges of God, in 1955. It was the first church growth book and launched the church growth movement. In 1961 McGavran moved to Northwest Christian College in Eugene, Oregon where he began the first church growth institute. He moved the institute to Fuller Theological Seminary in 1965 where he also began the school of world missions (Wagner 56-60). His colleagues at Fuller included Alan Tippett, C. Peter Wagner, and Ralph Winter. McGavran's second book, How Churches Grow, was published in 1966. Understanding Church Growth, published originally in 1970, was McGavran's third book and became the standard text for the church growth movement (Schaller 14-17).

The foundation of church growth, McGavran and Hunter say, is a theological one. The Bible teaches that without Christ, people are lost for eternity, and "God wants them found" (19). When lost people are saved, churches grow. "So, church growth is faithfulness to God" (19). The key of church growth is to answer the questions, "What are the causes of church growth?" and "What are the barriers to church growth?" (16).

McGavran asserts that the church is called to grow in four different areas. First, churches must experience internal growth. This is growth in the congregation's quality, depth, or spiritual maturity. The second area of growth is expansion growth. This occurs when the congregation brings in new members. Expansion growth can happen biologically (members having children), through transfers from other churches, or through conversions of unbelievers. The third area of growth is extension growth. This is when a congregation reaches a group of people outside of its normal cultural or

geographic area by starting branch churches targeted for a specific people group. The fourth area is bridging growth. This is what we commonly think of as missions (Strategies 31-32).

The major criticism of the church growth movement is that it focuses purely on techniques and human effort to make churches grow. Church growth is often seen as a technical way to address a spiritual problem. That is, if a church has the right programs, the right strategy, and enough motivation, they can make growth happen. It is the problem of people “trying in their own strength to do what only God can do” (Schwarz, Natural 6).

Church Health Movement

Despite the efforts of the church growth movement, the majority of the churches in America are not doing well. George Barna reports that the vast majority of churches are either stagnant or declining. He says that very few of the nation’s 300,000-plus Protestant churches are growing at a rate of 10 percent a year in worship attendance (15). The church growth movement has helped many churches in America and cannot be blamed that more churches are not doing better than they are.

Leaders in the area of church health believe that the church health movement was born out of a response to the technocratic, methodological aspects of the church growth field (Schwarz, Natural 7; Hemphill 10; Macchia 14). The church health movement was born out of the church growth movement but is distinct from its originator. While the goal of church growth is to identify strengths in a local congregation and capitalize on them, the goal of church health is to create and maintain a balance of the five purposes of the church: evangelism, worship, fellowship, discipleship, and ministry (Crossbow).

The church health movement begins by looking at the Church as a living organism.

This is a biblical view of the Church. In the New Testament, the Church is viewed as the body of Christ (1 Cor. 2:12) and as his bride (John 3:29). The Church is also called a field (Matt. 9:38), a building (1 Pet. 2:5), a vine (John 15:5), and a flock (John 10:16). In all of these metaphors, the Church is seen as a living organism. The one exception might seem to be the building metaphor, but even there it is a living building, a work in progress with “living stones” being built into a “spiritual house” (1 Pet. 2:5). The “body of Christ” metaphor for the Church is used thirty-seven times in the New Testament.

The church health movement does not focus on numerical growth but on the overall health of a congregation. The church health movement is not against church growth but considers it “one of many natural consequences of a church’s health” (Schwarz, Paradigm 9). A church will usually manifest its health by growing, but at other times health may simply involve maintenance with little or no growth. To assume that a church that is not growing is not healthy is incorrect (Steinke viii-ix). For example, over the course of several years Church X may show very little sustained numeric growth, but in fact, they may have helped to plant several daughter churches, sending out dozens of well-trained and equipped lay leaders and workers. So while Church X does not seem to have grown itself, it has instead reached a size it is comfortable with and now grows by daughtering new churches.

Church health has to do with the quality of life in the church. Steinke asserts that a healthy congregation is one that is able to actively and responsibly address, cope with, and/or heal the disturbances it encounters, not one without any troubles. To that end, health is a direction, a process, not a destination. Health is a resource for life. A congregation does not exist to be healthy but attempts to be healthy in order for it to better fulfill its mission.

A key aspect to church health is viewing the church as a system. In systems theory the whole is more than the sum of its parts, and all of the parts are interrelated and interact with one another. To understand a system, one must look at the whole system not just the individual parts because no individual part functions independently. When one part of a system changes, it affects all of the other parts in a ripple effect. All parts connect to and affect each other (Steinke 3-4).

The human body serves as an excellent example of a system. A person is more than just the sum of his or her parts. All of the individual parts of the human body are interconnected, affect one another, and must work together in order for the system to survive. When one part is changed or injured, for example, then it affects all of the other parts of the body. The church, too, is a system. It has many parts that are interconnected and must work together for the system to survive and thrive. Ronald Richardson contends that the church is composed of six systems: emotional, structural, communication, decision making, economic, and cultural (28-29).

Healthy churches do not focus on numeric goals for growth but on the quality characteristics of church health. Following are some approaches to church health.

The Purpose-driven Church

Rick Warren, the senior pastor of Saddleback Valley Community Church, contends that church health, and thus church growth, are the result of having the five biblical purposes of the church in balance.

Church growth is the natural result of church health. Church health can only occur when our message is *biblical* [original emphasis] and our mission is *balanced* [original emphasis]. Each of the five New Testament purposes of the church must be in equilibrium with the others for health to occur. (49)

Balancing the five purposes of the church is not something that happens automatically.

Warren says a pastor's human nature is to emphasize the purpose or two about which he or she is most passionate. Therefore, the pastor must continually work to correct imbalances (49).

Warren defines the five New Testament purposes of the church as worship, ministry, evangelism, fellowship, and discipleship. Worship is celebrating God's presence by magnifying him and exalting his name. Ministry involves God's people demonstrating God's love to others by meeting their needs and healing their hurts. Evangelism is the process of sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with those who do not yet know him. Fellowship is the body of Christ caring for each other as the loving family of God. Discipleship is the process of helping people become more like Christ in their thoughts, feelings, and actions (103-106).

Warren uses two simple illustrations to show how his church applies the five purposes which help to insure that his church stays in balance, and thus healthy. The Life Development Process, pictured as a baseball diamond, illustrates what they do at Saddleback. The Circles of Commitment, illustrated as five concentric circles, show with whom they do the process. The Life Development Process builds on a baseball metaphor. A seeker starts at home plate. By completing Saddleback's Class 101, which covers salvation and church membership (fellowship), the new convert gets to first base. A church member gets to second base by completing Class 201 which discusses spiritual maturity and growth (discipleship). Third base is achieved by completing Class 301 in which a person discovers his or her spiritual gifts and commits to serving in a ministry (ministry). The believer arrives back to home plate by completing Class 401, which emphasizes sharing your faith (evangelism) and missions. All the way around the baseball diamond, the believer is actively participating in worship, which is symbolized

by the pitcher's mound (145).

The five concentric Circles of Commitment illustrate different levels of commitment and spiritual maturity within the church. The goal is to move people from the outermost circle which represents a low level of commitment and maturity to the innermost circle which represents high commitment and maturity. The outermost circle represents the Community, that is unchurched, uncommitted people. The next circle in is called the Crowd and represents regular attenders, people who come to church almost every week. The third circle in is called the Congregation. These people are members of the church. They have arrived at "first base." The fourth circle in is the Committed. These are godly, growing people who are committed to discipleship. They have gotten to "second base." The innermost circle is the Core. These people are at "third base" and are dedicated to ministering to others. They lead and serve in various ministries of the church. Warren points out that Jesus met people at whatever level of spiritual commitment they had and then helped to move them to deeper levels of commitment (131-35).

Through implementing the purpose-driven model, Saddleback church has grown to over twelve thousand in its weekend worship services, but Warren is quick to point out that the goal "is not to make your church as large as Saddleback. Size is not the issue. The important issue is this: Your church will be stronger and healthier by being purpose driven" (93).

Natural Church Development

In Paradigm Shift in the Church, Christian Schwarz discusses what he believes are the problems in the church today. Schwarz says that the problem in the church is not just one of growth or the lack thereof; these are merely symptoms of a deeper problem.

Schwarz believes that the real problem involves a more basic theological misunderstanding, even a wrong picture of God. The problem is our concept of the church and church health (9).

Schwarz champions a model of the church based on a bipolar ecclesiology and says it is essential for a theological understanding of church growth (Natural 11). His model seeks to balance the relationship between the church as an organization and the church as an organism.

Schwarz builds his model of the church on two poles: the dynamic pole, which emphasizes the organic nature of the church, and the static pole, which emphasizes the institutional, technical side of the church. Both of these poles are needed for church development and are found in the New Testament. The dynamic pole is found in passages which describe the church as the body of Christ or a living organism (Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12:12; John 15:5). The static pole can be seen in passages that describe the church as a building or in technical terms (1 Cor. 3:10-13).

The nature of the dynamic pole consists of faith, fellowship, and service. This pole is characterized by terms like organic, grow, freedom, and “all by itself.” The nature of the static pole consists of doctrine, sacrament, and office. It is characterized by words like technical, build, order, human-made. This is the institutional side of the church. The institutional side of the church gives form and order to the dynamic side of the church, while the dynamic side brings life and energy to the static side (Schwarz, Natural 17-18).

Inherent dangers exist in either of the poles. If one overemphasizes the dynamic pole, this can lead to subjectivism and spiritualism. A spiritual experience becomes the standard by which everything is measured. If, on the other hand, one overemphasizes the static pole, this leads to institutionalism and objectivism. In this case, the danger becomes

monism in which the elements of the institution (liturgy, icons, structures) take on a magical quality that guarantee the presence of Christ. Schwarz says that every institution is in danger of developing a monistic institutionalism, while, in the same way, every spiritual experience brings the danger of moving towards spiritualism (Natural 22-23).

The model works best with a balanced interplay between the two poles.

On the one hand, the development of the church as an organism inevitably leads to the creation of institutions. On the other hand, the aim of these institutions is to be useful in stimulating the development of the church as an organism. (Schwarz, Natural 20)

A mutual flow between the two poles keeps them balanced and in harmony with one another.

When this balance is achieved, the “all by itself principle” takes effect. This principle states that God has built into his church “growth automatisms.” Schwarz builds this principle on the parable of the seeds, found in Mark 4:26-29.

[Jesus] also said, “This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.”

In this parable humans can effect certain factors but not others. The farmer is able to scatter the seed, and later he is able to harvest it. What he cannot do is make it grow. The growth seems to happen “all by itself,” or “automatically.” Of course the growth does not happen “all by itself,” but one understands that God produces the growth. In light of this parable, Schwarz suggests that we focus our attention on areas that we can influence to help produce growth and leave the rest of it in God’s hands to provide the growth “automatically” (Natural 12-13).

Schwarz has identified what he believes are six universal principles which

unleash the “all by itself” principle of organic growth within the church. These biotic principles are an extension of the natural created order and help to bring about the greatest possible results while expending the least possible amount of energy (Natural 62-63). They are

1. Interdependence—the way that individual parts fit into a system is more important than the parts themselves;
2. Multiplication—an organism can only grow so large, then it must multiply or reproduce;
3. Energy transformation—energy is turned in a desired direction through minute steering energies;
4. Multiusage—the results of work are transformed into energy, which, in turn, sustains the ongoing work;
5. Symbiosis—the living together of two dissimilar organisms in a mutually beneficial relationship; and,
6. Functionality—God has given everything a function, even if it is not readily apparent at first glance (Natural 66-77).

What are the areas that church leaders and members can influence to help their church become healthier? Schwarz has identified eight quality characteristics that he believes any church can work on to improve its qualitative growth. They are:

1. empowering leadership,
2. gift-oriented ministry,
3. passionate spirituality,
4. functional structures,
5. inspiring worship services,

6. holistic small groups,
7. need-oriented evangelism, and
8. loving relationships (Natural 22ff).

(The quality characteristics will be discussed in greater detail below.) These quality characteristics can be measured by surveying a portion of a church's congregation and leadership. The surveys are scored, and the result is a church's "quality index," or QI for each of the quality characteristics (20). Schwarz's research revealed an interesting phenomenon concerning a church's QI and its growth potential. Schwarz discovered that every church that scored at least sixty-five in every quality characteristic was a growing church, without exception. Schwarz calls this phenomenon the "65 hypothesis." This suggests "that there is a qualitative value beyond which quantitative growth will *always* [original emphasis] occur" (40).

Characteristics of a Healthy Church

Healthy churches focus on developing characteristics of health. Many church leaders have developed lists of what they believe are the characteristics of church health (see Table 2.1).

Lee Eclov, pastor of Chippewa Evangelical Free Church in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, asserts that the letters to the seven churches found in Revelation, chapters two and three, provide "the Lord's assessment of health indicators for local congregations" (40). They are:

1. holiness and dealing with sin,
2. endurance,
3. confronting evil and heresy in the church,
4. exclusive love for Christ,

5. corporate growth in ministry, and
6. love for one another (40).

Leith Anderson, senior pastor of Wooddale Church in Eden Prairie, Minnesota, suggests that each church needs to find its own definition of health through a process of comparison, consultation, and self-evaluation. He does offer a basic list of characteristics of a healthy church:

1. glorify God,
2. producing disciples,
3. exercising spiritual gifts,
4. relating positively to one's environment,
5. reproduction through evangelism,
6. incorporating newcomers,
7. openness to change,
8. trusting God, and
9. looking good on the outside (128).

Charles Singletary, founder and president of Church Resource Ministries, lists seven characteristics that are indicators of healthy growth:

1. a strong emphasis on prayer,
2. an obvious ministry of the Holy Spirit,
3. biblical balance,
4. individual and organic reproduction,
5. high level of lay mobilization,
6. qualitative and quantitative growth of the membership, and
7. healthy body life (115-16).

Ken Hemphill, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, believes that the church in Antioch, as recorded in the book of Acts, provides a model for a healthy church. He draws eight characteristics from this biblical example:

1. supernatural power,
2. Christ-exalting worship,
3. God-connecting prayer,
4. servant leadership,
5. kingdom family relationships,
6. God-sized vision,
7. passion for the lost, and
8. maturation of believers (15ff).

Robert Logan, vice president of Church Resource Ministries in Fullerton, California, presents ten principles that he says are “crucial to the health of growing churches” (19). They are

1. visioning faith and prayer,
2. effective pastoral leadership,
3. culturally relevant philosophy of ministry,
4. celebrative and reflective worship,
5. holistic disciple making,
6. expanding network of cell groups,
7. developing and resourcing leaders,
8. mobilizing believers according to their spiritual gifts,
9. appropriate and productive programming, and
10. starting churches that reproduce (19-42).

Stephen A. Macchia is president of Vision New England, a church renewal association. He decided that for Vision New England to be effective they needed to be able to determine what a healthy church looks like. Through years of discussions, field testing, study, and two major surveys, they identified ten characteristics of a healthy church (14). They are

1. God's empowering presence,
2. God-exalting worship,
3. spiritual disciplines,
4. learning and growing in community,
5. a commitment to loving and caring relationships,
6. servant-leadership development,
7. an outward focus,
8. wise administration and accountability,
9. networking with the body of Christ, and
10. stewardship and generosity (23).

In addition to the ten characteristics of church health, Macchia found nine common indicators of health in the one hundred churches he visited.

1. love, acceptance, and forgiveness,
2. relational integrity,
3. hunger for personal growth,
4. shift from traditional to contemporary worship,
5. prayer,
6. relationship-centered ministry,
7. use of personal stories,

8. service, and

9. networking (19-22).

Other church leaders and pastors see one or two characteristics as the key to church health. Ralph Neighbor states that the main reason the church in America is unhealthy is because its structure is unbiblical (36). Tracy Keenan says that church health is simply a matter of focus. The church must be focused on Christ (35). Steve Sjogren says that his church equates health with authenticity. For churches to be healthy, their pastors must be real and willing to “tell their honest, heartfelt stories” (“Honest” 38). Erwin McManus states emphatically that church health is the result of a congregation having a unified cause (40).

Table 2.1 compares the characteristics of church health of the four leading authorities in the field of church health.

Table 2.1

Comparison of Church Health Characteristics

Christian Schwarz	Ken Hemphill	Robert Logan	Stephen Macchia
Empowering Leadership	Servant Leadership	Effective Pastoral Leadership	Servant-leadership Development
Gift-oriented Ministry	God-sized Vision	Developing and Resourcing Leaders	Spiritual Disciplines
Passionate Spirituality	God-connecting Prayer	Mobilizing Believers According to their Spiritual Gift	A Commitment to Loving and Caring Relationships
Functional Structures	Supernatural Power	Visioning Faith and Prayer	Wise Administration and Accountability
Inspiring Worship Services	Christ-exalting Worship	Appropriate and Productive Programming	God-exalting Worship

Table 2.1 Continued

Christian Schwarz	Ken Hemphill	Robert Logan	Stephen Macchia
Holistic Small Groups	Passion for the Lost	Celebrative and Reflective Worship	An Outward Focus
Need-oriented Evangelism	Kingdom Family Relationships	Expanding Network of Cell Groups	God's Empowering Presence
Loving Relationships	Maturation of Believers	Holistic Disciple Making	Learning and Growing in Community
		Culturally Relevant Philosophy of Ministry	Networking with the Body of Christ
		Starting Churches that Reproduce	Stewardship and Generosity

Natural Church Development

The premier church health model is Christian Schwarz's Natural Church Development. Schwarz conducted the most massive and comprehensive research project on the topic of church health ever completed. Surveys were given to thirty members of over one thousand churches in thirty-two different countries spanning six continents. The survey had to be translated into eighteen languages. They received and analyzed over 4.2 million responses. The result of this massive project was a verifiable answer to the question, "What church growth principles are true, regardless of culture, and theological persuasion?" (Natural 19).

The answer to that question is Schwarz's eight quality characteristics of church health: empowering leadership, gift-oriented ministry, passionate spirituality, functional structures, inspiring worship service, holistic small groups, need-oriented evangelism, and loving relationships. These eight characteristics are all found and in balance in

healthy, growing churches. Balance refers to the idea that all of the characteristics, to some extent, are found in equal measure. Schwarz says that “no church wanting to grow qualitatively and quantitatively can afford to overlook any one of these quality characteristics” (Natural 38). A “harmonious interplay” of all of the characteristics must exist (39).

Critiques of Natural Church Development

Not everyone has received Schwarz’s work with open arms. John Ellas and Flavil Yeakley, two experts in the church growth field, have made some strong criticisms of Schwarz’s Natural Church Development, calling it “fatally flawed” and “pseudo-scientific” (83). Their criticisms revolve around several areas, which we shall examine briefly.

First, Ellas and Flavil note several omissions in Schwarz’s work. They object to Schwarz calling his study a scientific one because he omits including enough information in Natural Church Development so that others can replicate his study (83). They object that significance levels for the statistics in the study are not included (84) and that correlation coefficients have also been omitted despite Schwarz’s claim to strong positive or negative correlations to some of his findings (85).

Second, Ellas and Yeakley object to the conclusions Schwarz draws based on a correlational study. They grant that Schwarz may be correct, that the eight quality characteristics may cause numerical growth, but they propose that numerical growth might possibly cause a positive regard for each of the eight quality characteristics, which would reverse Schwarz’s proposed cause and effect. Ellas and Yeakley say that in a correlational study, knowing which is the cause and which is the effect is almost impossible (86).

Third, in Natural Church Development, Schwarz gives the history of his project, and he notes that after conducting research for seven of the ten years of his study, his questionnaire tool was rewritten to conform to approved social science research methods. Ellas and Yeakley find several objections to this news. First, they believe Schwarz is admitting that for seven years his research tool was not objective, reliable, or valid. Second, they applaud Schwarz's effort to correct the problems with the tool, but they strongly object to Schwarz continuing to base his research on the information gathered in those first seven years with a flawed tool (86-88).

Fourth, and finally, Ellas and Yeakley object to Schwarz's "straw man" approach through much of the book. They assert that over and over Schwarz presents himself as the acceptable middle ground between two extremes, with the church growth movement often being at one end of the spectrum. Schwarz does not name names in his allegation, and Ellas and Yeakley object that, as experts in the church growth field, they do not know about whom Schwarz might be talking. They feel he may be talking about how people perceive the church growth movement, which makes his arguments all the less substantial (89).

David Wetzler, the publisher for ChurchSmart Resources, responded to some of Ellas and Yeakley's criticisms in the next issue of the Journal of the American Society for Church Growth. Wetzler stated that the scientific foundations of Schwarz's work were readily available at the web site listed at the front of Natural Church Development. While the information was in German, he noted that it would soon be available in English ("Response" 84).

Daniel E. Simpson shares some of Ellas and Yeakley's concerns. He feels that Natural Church Development has an "arrogant tone and almost hostile approach"

(“Natural Church” 58). Simpson objects to Schwarz’s seeming attack on the church growth movement and that Schwarz presents himself as the one who finally has the answer as to why churches grow. Simpson also objects to the “straw man” tactic that he believes Schwarz employs. Simpson says, “He makes undocumented references to supposed church growth thinking, then proceeds to show its fallacy in contrast to the virtues of his own ideas” (61). Simpson does find much helpful, useful information in Natural Church Development and considers it a “must-read book for any serious student of church growth” (69).

Dan Simpson also published a series of letters in which he and Christian Schwarz dialogued about Simpson’s critique of Natural Church Development. In these letters Schwarz addresses some of the criticisms. First, Schwarz says that Natural Church Development was never meant to be a scientific book. It was written as a layman’s introduction to the system of Natural Church Development (“Response” 72). Second, the book is intentionally without footnotes, references to literature, quotations, and such, because it was written to be an international book. Due to differences in the discussion of church growth in different countries and parts of the world, such references would have made the book too specific to reach an international audience (72). Third, Schwarz clearly says that Natural Church Development was written to address “church growth thinking” (73). He says that he states as much clearly in the first chapter of the book. Schwarz claims that his arguments are not “straw men” but very real because the perceptions he enunciates are in “the hearts and heads of thousands of Christians” and that makes them very real indeed. They may not always be the exact beliefs of the leaders of the church growth movement, but they are certainly the perception of many, many Christians (73).

The Eight Quality Characteristics of Natural Church Development

A closer examination of each of these quality characteristics is now in order.

1. Empowering leadership. The key that Schwarz stresses in this first characteristic is that the leadership of the church empowers others. Instead of just using lay people as “helpers” in the ministry, Schwarz says that the empowering leader “assists Christians to attain the spiritual potential God has for them. These pastors equip, support, motivate, and mentor individuals, enabling them to become all that God wants them to be” (*Natural* 22). The best biblical example of this characteristic is found in 2 Timothy 2:2: “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.” Here Paul urges Timothy not just to pass on the things he has learned from Paul but to teach and equip men so that they can, in turn, teach and train others. Multitudes of authors have written extensively on the importance of visionary leadership in an organization, including the church (e.g., Galloway, *20/20*; Maxwell, *Within*; Weems; Engstrom).

Engstrom identifies five styles of leadership: *laissez-faire*, democratic-participative, manipulative-inspirational, benevolent-autocratic, and autocratic-bureaucratic. He emphasizes that a leader must continually adopt his or her style of leadership to a given situation. Over time the leaders will change, the followers will change, and the organization will change, any of which could call for a different style of leadership. The style of leadership employed, Engstrom asserts, must be based on the personality of the leader, the needs of the group being supervised, and the situation. “Successful leaders adapt their leader behavior to meet the needs of the group and the particular situation” (68).

Lovett Weems, Jr. helps to clarify some common misconceptions about

leadership. First, he says confusion exists in understanding the difference between leadership and authority. Authority can be given. It comes with position, but leadership must be earned. Second, confusion exists between leadership and style. A particular style of leadership with negative connotations can become the only model of leadership, but no particular style should become synonymous with leadership. Third, enabling leadership is often confused with empowering leadership. Leadership requires that the leader share his or her vision, agenda, and direction with the followers in a direct, straightforward manner, while enablers focus more on the process and not enough on achieving the mission (30-34).

In a study of ninety leaders, Bennis and Nanus identified four common themes that they found in all these leaders. The first theme is attention through vision. Every leader had a strong vision, an agenda that served to grab the followers' attention. The second theme is meaning through communication—the ability of the leader to communicate successfully his/her vision to the followers. The third theme is trust through positioning. This means that the leader earns the trust of the followers through authenticity and consistency. The leader is the epitome of clarity and reliability, especially in following his or her vision. The fourth theme is deployment of self through positive self-regard. Leaders must manage themselves well and be confident in who they are without becoming egocentric. Leaders recognize their strengths and compensate for their weaknesses (87ff).

Hersey, Blanchard, and Johnson propose a situational model for leadership. The situational model suggests four basic decision-making styles for leaders. The first style is telling. The leader provides specific instructions and supervises the followers closely. The second style is selling. The leader explains decisions and provides opportunity for

clarification from the followers. The third style is participating. The followers share their ideas, and the leader facilitates the decision-making process. The fourth style is delegating. The leader turns over all responsibility for decision making and implementation to the followers (188-228).

Lending a more behavioral approach to leadership, Peter Drucker details five habits that make leaders effective. (1) Effective leaders know where their time goes. They carefully manage their time. (2) Effective leaders focus on outward contribution. They focus on results. (3) Effective leaders build on their strengths and the strengths of others. They do not build on weaknesses; they hire to compensate for their weaknesses. (4) Effective leaders focus their attention. They concentrate on a few areas that will bring outstanding results, set priorities, and stick with them. (5) Effective leaders make effective decisions. Effective decisions are not a result of consensus but judgments based on opposing opinions (25ff).

Aubrey Malphurs contends that leadership that truly empowers people is values-driven. A church, or any organization, must have a clearly defined set of values and those values are the “key to an extended, successful ministry (10). The values of a ministry help people determine how involved they want to be. Do they share the same values, precepts, and goals as the church? Can they passionately commit to those values? Shared values and beliefs “tend to knit individual and organization purposes together” (18). People feel empowered because they know they are working towards a common goal and with a common vision.

The crucial task for a leader, John Maxwell maintains, is nurturing other potential leaders. This is the essence of empowering leadership. He offers some guidelines for nurturing potential leaders. Maxwell says that the empowering leader must

1. build trust through accountability, predictability, and reliability;
2. show transparency by admitting mistakes and accepting consequences;
3. offer time because time spent with potential leaders is an investment;
4. believe in people because people grow towards a leader's expectations;
5. give encouragement by praising the potential leader every time you see improvement;
6. exhibit consistency because people are able to grow when they know what to expect from the leader;
7. hold hope high because a great leader gives hope when people cannot find it within themselves;
8. add significance to potential leaders' lives by making them a part of something worthwhile;
9. provide security, that is, an environment where people can grow and develop;
10. reward production;
11. establish a support system including emotional support, skills training, money, equipment, and personnel; and,
12. discern and personalize the potential leader's journey (Around 67-80).

Dale Galloway, founding pastor of New Hope Community Church in Portland, Oregon, says that empowering leadership is best seen in the "Jethro Principle" found in Exodus 18:13-27. Moses was the leader of Israel and completely overwhelmed by the task of settling all the disputes for the people. Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, suggested that Moses decentralize or share the ministry. Jethro instructed Moses to select capable leaders, train them, organize them over groups of tens, fifties, hundreds, and thousands, organize a chain of command, and delegate authority. In so doing Moses both

empowered many more people to take leadership and also balanced his own life.

Galloway concludes that “whenever you encourage people to take ownership of a particular ministry, that ministry is going to begin to thrive” (Small 86-87).

2. Gift-oriented ministry. The second characteristic, gift-oriented ministry, emphasizes the need for Christians to serve and minister in an area in which they are specifically gifted. The conviction behind this characteristic of church health is that God gives gifts to every believer that are to be used to build up the body of Christ (1 Pet. 4:10). Unfortunately, many churches simply put persons in ministry, doing a job, without considering what their gifts are. Thus, a person with the gift of hospitality winds up in the nursery, while another person with the gift of teaching ends up on the finance committee. The result is that both lay people and staff members are frustrated and burned out. Lay people become burned out because ministry has become a labor, an unpleasant chore that they feel a moral compulsion to fulfill. Staff members become frustrated because they are constantly trying to occupy ministry vacancies that will not stay filled.

The gift-oriented ministry approach contends that people should minister in the areas in which they are gifted. The role of the leadership of the church is to help people discover their gifts and then plug them into ministries that best fit their gifts. Schwarz contends, “When Christians serve in their area of giftedness, they generally function less in their own strength and more in the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus ordinary people can accomplish the extraordinary!” (Natural 24).

Rick Warren, pastor of Saddleback Valley Community Church, has developed a program which helps members of his church find their gifts and the kind of ministry in which they should be involved. Warren believes that God uniquely shapes each person to prepare him or her to perform some kind of ministry. His program for discovering a

person's gift mix is called SHAPE. SHAPE is an acronym, which stands for spiritual gifts, heart, abilities, personality, and experiences. Warren believes that when a person takes into account these five areas, he or she will be better able to determine what kind of a ministry God has prepared him or her to do. When a person's SHAPE matches the ministry he or she is involved in, that person will be most effective and fulfilled in ministry (375).

Willow Creek Community Church, pastored by Bill Hybels, has developed a similar program called Network. Through the Network program, both staff people and church members discover their spiritual gifts, areas of ministry passion, and personal ministry style. Then based on those results, they are placed in an area of ministry that best matches who they are. Serving and ministering then becomes an exhilarating joy for everyone (Bugbee, Cousins, and Hybels 9).

Frank Tillapaugh, pastor of Bear Valley Baptist Church, tells how releasing the laity of his church to do ministry radically changed the atmosphere of his church and the amount of ministry they were able to accomplish. By putting lay people into "front-line" ministries, they dramatically reduced the number of "people-problems" with which church leaders seem always to be dealing. They were also able to greatly increase their ability to fulfill their part of the Great Commission. Bear Valley is a church of modest facilities, but with over one thousand lay people mobilized according to their giftedness, the church supports ministries all over their city to a wide variety of different "target groups" (98).

Dale Galloway, founding pastor of New Hope Community Church, grew that church from a few members meeting in a drive-in theatre to over six thousand by following the principle of gift-oriented ministry. He and his staff trained and mobilized

hundreds of lay pastors to minister to their fellow church members in small home fellowship groups known as Tender Loving Care Groups. Galloway says, “We not only release but train and equip our lay people to do the spiritual work of the ministry in the lives of people. Their work ... makes the difference between hell and heaven, life and death, brokenness and wholeness” (20/20 144).

3. Passionate spirituality. The third quality characteristic, passionate spirituality, describes a lifestyle that is deeply committed to Christ and is characterized by an excitement for prayer, worship, witnessing, and a joyful faith. Jesus said that the greatest commandment is to “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” (Matt. 22:37) and that is an excellent description of passionate spirituality—loving God with all that we are.

Schwarz found a definite link between passionate spirituality and the prayer life of the Christians he surveyed. The amount of time a person spends in prayer plays a minor role in the quality of the church, but if a Christian finds prayer to be an “inspiring experience” then prayer plays a significant role in the health of the church (Natural 26).

Jim Cymbala and Dean Merrill, in Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire, tell the story of how passionate spirituality changed the Brooklyn Tabernacle from a small inner city church to a church of over six thousand that ministers to the most desperate needs in the city. The key for his church was prayer. They contend that the size of a church’s congregation does not matter if the people do not have an appetite for God. The Brooklyn Tabernacle’s Tuesday night prayer meeting is the only barometer of the church; it is the measuring stick by which he judges the church’s success or failure. At these meetings people pour out their hearts’ needs, desires, and praises to God (33).

Many factors in the church work against passionate spirituality. Gordon

MacDonald cites seven of them:

1. words without action,
2. busyness without purpose,
3. calendars without a Sabbath,
4. relationships without mutual nourishment,
5. pastoral personality without self-examination,
6. natural giftedness without spiritual power, and
7. an enormous theology without an adequate spirituality (19).

These are all common problems in the church that serve to drain the spirit and passion out of the leaders and people. Many of the eight quality characteristics of health factor into this list, emphasizing the interrelatedness of them all. Small groups provide nourishment through relationships; gift-oriented ministry prevents misuse of natural giftedness; and, passionate spirituality balances enormous theology. As Schwarz asserts, the eight characteristics work together and balance each other (Natural 39).

4. Functional structures. Schwarz's fourth quality characteristic, functional structures, builds on the idea that the structures in a church must promote the ongoing multiplication of the ministry that is taking place in the church. In other words, the structures must bend and change to meet the growing needs of the ministries and not vice versa. The biblical principle behind this quality characteristic comes from Luke chapter 5: "And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins" (Natural 37–38). New and growing ministries (new wine) require new structures (new wine skins).

Howard Snyder strongly reminds his readers that "the structure is not the church,

just as the wineskin is not the wine” (Community 138-39). Structure is necessary for the church to exist and carry out its mission in a particular place and time. Structure is neutral. It can be good or bad, helpful or a hindrance. The question that must be answered is whether the structure, both physical and organizational, aids or impedes the life and ministry of the church.

In The Problem of Wine Skins: Church Structure in a Technological Age, Snyder charges that “Our church buildings, then, witness to the *immobility, inflexibility, lack of fellowship, pride and class divisions* [original emphasis] in the modern church” (73). Snyder argues that we should do away with church building all together and meet in small groups in homes and rent facilities for large corporate worship services. Snyder concedes that such a suggestion invites an onslaught of criticisms and protests, but he argues that healthy churches must not be edifice centered.

Warren agrees with Snyder. As his church grew over its first fifteen years, they never owned a single building. Their small groups met in homes, and they met for corporate worship anywhere that had enough space, including restaurants, office buildings, schools, bank buildings, recreation centers, theaters, and community centers. The church grew to over ten thousand attendees before owning their first building. The lack of a fixed meeting place was not always easy, but it allowed them to easily adjust their structure as the church grew and its needs and ministries changed (45-46).

The term functional structures does not just apply to buildings but also to the organization, governance, and administration of a church. In the churches that George Barna has studied and surveyed, he found that successful, growing churches do not have a common structure. They do have a common philosophy, though, about structure: “*The ministry is not called to fit the church’s structure; the structure exists to further effective*

ministry [original emphasis]" (137). In many of these growing churches, the leadership would choose to change the structure rather than to limit a ministry opportunity. These churches are able then to respond quickly and decisively when a situation arises that calls for change.

Snyder suggests three guidelines for evaluating a church's structure. First, it must be biblically valid. The church's structure must be compatible with the message and nature of the gospel and not contrary to the biblical example. Second, a church's structure must be culturally viable. It must be compatible with the culture in which it finds itself. Third, a church's structure must be temporally flexible. An openness and willingness to change the structures of the church as the needs and circumstances of the church's context change must exist. (*Community* 140-43).

5. Inspiring worship service. The fifth quality characteristic, inspiring worship service, describes a worship event that provides an "inspiring experience" for those who attend (Schwarz, *Natural* 30). The style of worship is not the issue. The service might be traditional or contemporary, targeted at believers or seekers, highly liturgical or free flowing—it matters not. What matters is that people think or believe like they have had an encounter with God. People who attend inspiring worship services typically describe going to church as "fun," and the service seems to draw people to it "all by itself" (31). An inspiring worship service elicits the same response from its attendees as that of the psalmist who said, "I rejoiced with those who said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the LORD'" (Psalm 122:1).

Robert Logan describes the goal of a good worship service as people "leaving and feeling very good about meeting with God and being touched by him" (82). This can happen when effective communication of attitudes, values, beliefs, and information take

place on several levels: between God and believers, between believers and their fellow believers, and between believers and the unchurched.

Robert Webber describes three principles that must be at work for worship to be inspiring. First, worship celebrates Christ. From the beginning to the end of the worship service, the life, death, and resurrection of Christ is celebrated through song, prayer, Scripture, sacraments, and proclamation. Second, divine action is in worship. When people celebrate Christ, something happens. Through the Holy Spirit, Christ meets with those celebrating him. “Through worship, a right ordering of God, the world, self, and neighbor is experienced, and the worshipper receives a peace that passes understanding ... [and] his transforming resurrection power” (92-93). Third, worship necessitates a human response. Worship calls for the involvement of our whole selves: mind, body, and soul. Worship planning must therefore allow time for a response, a time for the worshipper to say “yes” to the action of God in worship.

Sundo Kim, pastor of Kwanglim Methodist Church in Seoul, Korea, the largest Methodist church in the world, says that inspiring worship is one of the keys to church growth. Kim says the pastor’s duty is to develop inspiring worship services that let the people “taste the kingdom of God.” He asserts that inspiring worship is made up of four parts: inspiring preaching, inspiring music, inspiring liturgy, and inspiring ushering. On this last point, Kim asserts that the ushers are the “hosts of worship” and that they do much to set the tone and mood for the people.

6. Holistic small groups. The sixth quality characteristic, holistic small groups, Schwarz sees as the most critical of all the quality characteristics (Natural 33). The emphasis here is on the holistic nature of the small groups. These groups are more than just Bible studies. In holistic small groups, all the needs of an individual believer are

being met. “Healthy small groups combine evangelism, spiritual nurture, and calling to service” (George 59). The small group is where discipleship, training, evangelism, outreach, service, caring, nurturing, and spiritual growth take place. Dale Galloway says that the four basic purposes of small groups are evangelism, discipleship, shepherding, and service (Small 61). George Hunter gives different names to the four components of small groups: love, learn, decide, do (94).

The small group model of ministry is based on the fact that this is how Jesus and the early church did ministry—the home was often the focal point of ministry. Jesus visited people in their homes (Matt. 8:14-15; 9:23-25; 13:36; Mark 1:29-31; 3:20-21; Luke 8:51-56) and went to the homes of “sinners” (Matt. 9:10-13; Mark 2:15-17; Luke 5:29-32). The book of Acts clearly describes the early Church meeting in homes for fellowship and worship (Acts 2:44-47; 20:17-20). At least nine places in Acts refer to believers worshiping, fellowshiping, or being taught in homes (Acts 2:2-4; 2:46; 5:52; 10:24-48; 16:25-34; 16:40; 20:17-20; 21:8-14; 28:30-31). Galloway contends that the way to grow a great church is to follow the early Church plan of meeting for large group worship celebrations on Sunday and throughout the week meeting in small groups in homes for in-depth fellowship, discipleship, and caring (Small 14).

As churches grow larger and larger, they must also grow smaller and smaller, that is, that they continuously multiply their small group ministry. Small groups are the only place where adequate care, nurture, and discipleship can happen. George’s meta-church model is based on the idea that a church can grow to any size because an enormous meta-modeled dinosaur-size church is really made up of a host of mouse-size small churches, or small groups (51). The small groups, or cell groups, are designed to grow and then multiply (through division), just like the living cells in a human body. This is where the

growth of a church really happens, on the cell group level.

The small group is also where leadership training, preparation, and exercise takes place. Each group has an active group leader and an apprentice leader who is preparing to lead a new group when the cell multiplies. The group leader is always encouraged to identify potential leaders—ones who have leadership potential but are not yet ready to lead a group. The meta-church model depends on leadership development, and small group ministry relies “on the ability to identify and develop qualified leaders to shepherd little flocks of believers and reach out to strays who need Christ” (Donahue 14).

7. Need-oriented evangelism. The seventh quality characteristic, need-oriented evangelism, describes an approach to evangelism that emphasizes the questions and needs of the non-Christians. While many traditional evangelism programs emphasize a particular method of evangelism, Schwarz notes that the focus of this type of evangelism is on the perceived needs and questions of non-Christians. Need-oriented evangelism greatly reduces the manipulation factor involved in other approaches to evangelism because in need-oriented evangelism the Christian adapts his or her method to meet the needs of the unbeliever rather than asking the non-Christian to squeeze into the Christian’s preconceived model of how to do evangelism.

When Jesus sent out his disciples, he gave them instructions on how to reach the lost: “Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give” (Matt. 10:8). Jesus told them to start their ministry by focusing on the felt needs of the people. Jesus conducted his ministry in the same way: he healed the sick, fed the hungry, gave sight to the blind, made the lame to walk, cast out demons, and so on. Jesus always began with the felt needs of the people around him. Ministering to the needs of the people gave him an opening, an entrance into their lives,

so that he could speak to their deeper spiritual needs.

Steve Sjogren, senior pastor of Vineyard Christian Fellowship in Cincinnati, Ohio, has made this type of evangelism a way of life for his congregation. He calls it “servant evangelism,” and it consists of members of his church going out into their community and doing simple, small acts of kindness for people, with no strings attached. A few of the hundreds of services they have preformed throughout their city include washing windshields, gift wrapping presents in shopping malls, giving away cold drinks in public parks, mowing lawns and raking leaves, loading bags of groceries, and providing free tutoring for students. Sjogren contends that by preceding words of love with deeds of love, his people are able “to sneak into the hearts of those we serve” (Conspiracy 23).

8. Loving relationships. The eighth quality characteristic is loving relationships. Schwarz’s research indicates that “there is a highly significant relationship between the ability of a church to demonstrate love and its long-term growth potential” (Natural 36). While love is often viewed as a mysterious feeling that comes and goes, Schwarz measured churches’ “love quotients” by asking members questions like: how often do you invite one another over for meals or coffee? How generous is the church in doling out compliments? How much laughter is in the church? How much time do members spend together outside of official church functions? Schwarz found that growing churches have a significantly higher “love quotient” than declining churches (36).

Win Arn, Carroll Nyquist, and Charles Arn conducted a study in the mid-eighties that compared churches’ ability to love and their ability to grow and reach new people. They received survey responses from 8,658 people in 168 churches in thirty-nine different denominations. They defined love as both an attitude and an action that can be

learned and practiced. “Love is intentionally doing something caring or helpful for another person, in Jesus’ name, regardless of the cost or consequences to oneself” (25).

They give eight reasons why love should be the central mission of the church:

1. A loving church sees sinners repent and become Christians;
2. A loving church authenticates its message;
3. A loving church contributes to joy, health, and vitality in its members;
4. A loving church attracts members;
5. A loving church assimilates and holds people;
6. A loving church runs more smoothly;
7. A loving church is obedient to God’s command; and,
8. A loving church is the best hope of changing our world (125-31).

Their research clearly indicates that a strong relationship exists between a church’s ability to demonstrate love and its ability to attract and retain new people.

The importance of loving relationships is nothing new, just a restatement of Biblical truths: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’” (Matt. 22:37-39). “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:35).

CHAPTER 3

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Pastors and church leaders have long struggled with the question, “How can I make my church grow?” Whole bodies of literature have been written and a multitude of organizations have been formed to help answer this question. More recently, though, the focus has been shifting from church growth to church health. The questions have become, “How can I make my church more healthy?” and “What does a healthy church look like?” The assumption is that healthy churches will be growing churches.

Until recently no standardized method existed to determine the health of a church. Pastors and lay leaders could look at many factors to gain some insight into the health of their churches, but no way to measure the health of a congregation with any discernable degree of objectivity existed. Christian Schwarz and Christoph Schalk have provided a way for a congregation to measure its health with the introduction of Natural Church Development (NCD) and the Natural Church Development Survey. The NCD Survey measures a congregation’s health along eight quality characteristics. Schwarz and Schalk have also developed an implementation guide to help churches improve in the areas where they are weakest and thus improve the overall health of the church.

The purpose of this study is to determine if an increase in the health of Creekside Community Church (quality) does indeed lead to an increase in the growth of the church (quantity). The study accomplished this by measuring the health of Creekside Community Church along Schwarz’s eight quality characteristics, working to improve the church’s minimum factors over the course of a year, taking another measurement of the church’s health and determining, by comparison of church statistics, whether an increase in church health led to an increase in church growth.

Research Questions

Two primary research questions guided this study.

Research Question 1

What is the current health of the congregation in terms of the eight quality characteristics defined by Schwarz and what effect will the strategic process of attempting to increase the health of the church have on its growth?

Research Question 2

Which of the quality characteristics appear to be most closely associated with church growth?

We used Schwarz and Schalk's Natural Church Development Survey to determine the health of the congregation along the eight quality characteristics. These quality characteristics are

1. empowering leadership,
2. gift-oriented ministry,
3. passionate spirituality,
4. functional structures,
5. inspiring worship services,
6. holistic small groups,
7. need-oriented evangelism, and
8. loving relationships (Schwarz, Natural 22-37).

This project is built on the premise of a positive correlation between church health and church growth. Statistics concerning attendance, baptisms, conversions, and giving at Creekside Community Church were compiled for the months surrounding each administration of the survey. An analysis was then conducted to determine if, in fact, a

correlation existed between the health of the congregation in terms of the eight quality characteristics and the growth of the congregation in terms of attendance, conversions, baptisms, and giving.

Population and Sample

The population of the survey was the congregation of Creekside Community Church. The sample for this study included the participation of thirty members of the church's leadership community in addition to the senior pastor. The leadership community consists of those serving on primary boards and committees of the church. The participants in the survey were selected to represent a cross-section of the congregation with regard to length of time with the church, age, race, gender, and previous experience with other churches.

Methodology

After arriving at Creekside Community Church (July 2000), I contacted the Natural Church Development organization at ChurchSmart Resources and ordered the NCD Survey. ChurchSmart Resources, of Naperville, Illinois, is the company licensed in the United States to administer and score the NCD Survey. During the summer months, I determined who qualified as a member of the leadership community of the church, as defined by Schwarz, and requested their participation in this study. In early October, the thirty members of the leadership community of the church and I, the senior pastor, completed the first survey. The completed surveys were returned to ChurchSmart for scoring and evaluation.

The results were returned to the church along with the Implementation Guide to Natural Church Development. The Implementation Guide contains suggestions and courses of action for a church to take to help it strengthen its health characteristics

(Schwarz and Schalk). Based on the results of the survey and the recommendations of the Implementation Guide, a task force from among the leadership community was formed to create a strategy to increase the overall health of the church, focusing on the two characteristics that scored the lowest, our minimum factors.

After eight months, in late May 2001, the leadership community and senior pastor were brought together to repeat the NCD survey. During the next four months, no specific treatment was planned to be given to improve the health of the church in terms of the eight quality characteristics, although normal operations of the church continued.

The NCD Survey was planned be repeated for a final time one year later after the initial survey, in early October 2001. This treatment was to take the form of a single-group interrupted time-series, diagrammed as follows:



The “Os” represent the pre-, mid-, and posttests of church health. The “X” represents the eight-month application of the treatment, which is the strategic effort to improve the health factor of two or three of the quality characteristics.

Variables

Improvement in church health, as defined by the eight quality characteristics, is the dependent variable. Improvement (or lack of it) will be indicated by the variation in score (between one and one hundred) from the results of the first survey to the second and the second survey to the third. An increase in overall health was the goal of the study. The independent variables are the treatments that will be implemented between the first and second surveys.

Instrumentation

The instrument is the Natural Church Development Survey which is a self-

administered questionnaire consisting of ninety-one items measuring church health. The questionnaire was written by Christian Schwarz and revised by Christoph Schalk using “rigorous standards for objectivity, reliability, and validity, and used approved methods from social science for the analysis of the data” (Schwarz, Natural 19). ChurchSmart Resources translated and revised the survey for use in North America.

The questionnaire was used for a worldwide research project that sought to answer two questions:

1. What church growth principles are true regardless of culture and theological persuasion?
2. What should each church and every Christian do to obey the Great Commission in today’s world?

Over one thousand churches in thirty-two countries on six continents participated in the survey. The survey was translated into eighteen languages. Over four million responses were collected and analyzed (Schwarz, Natural 18). In each country studied, Schwarz normed the values obtained from the survey to a median of fifty, “i.e., the ‘average church’ for each country had a quality index of fifty for each of the eight characteristics” (38). Declining churches scored below the median in each of the eight characteristics; growing churches scored above the median.

The key to Schwarz’s study was to find “an empirical method for measuring the eight quality characteristics ... and for comparing them to one another” (Natural 38). They did this by structuring questions around each of the eight areas that met the two following criteria:

1. They had to show an empirically demonstrable connection (factor and item analysis) to the other questions on the same scale (equal the same quality

characteristic).

2. They had to show a demonstrably positive connection to the quantitative growth of the church (criteria validity) (38).

The ability to measure quantitatively the eight characteristics was the result of the survey.

One key factor Schwarz discovered is that no single factor by itself leads to church growth. The interplay of all eight characteristics is necessary for churches that want to grow in both quality and quantity. Another unusual discovery Schwarz made is what he calls the “65 hypothesis.” Every church surveyed that had a quality index of sixty-five or more for each of the eight quality characteristics is a growing church. This means that a qualitative value exists beyond which quantitative growth will always occur. They have found this to be true throughout the world, without exception (Natural 40).

Data Collection

The NCD Survey is a paper-and-pencil instrument that actually consists of two surveys. The first survey is a ninety-one question assessment on four pages that the thirty members of the church each will complete. The second survey is a single seventy-nine question assessment on four pages that the pastor completes (see Appendix A). The surveys were administered in a group setting in October 2000 and May 2001. A third administration was planned for October 2001. At each administration of the survey, the thirty-one subjects were gathered, and the purpose of the survey and study was explained to them. The surveys were then completed simultaneously and anonymously.

The completed surveys were mailed to ChurchSmart for tallying. ChurchSmart returned the results in approximately two weeks along with the Implementation Guide and suggestions on how to improve the health of the church based on the results of the survey.

Data Analysis

The results of the NCD Survey along with the statistical data from the church were sent to a private statistician for processing and analysis. This information was returned to me for further analysis and conclusions.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

On 1 October 2000, thirty members of Creekside Community Church and I completed the Natural Church Development survey. The surveys were collected and within a day or two mailed to ChurchSmart Resources for scoring. Within a month we received back a packet of information from ChurchSmart including the results of the survey with graphs and charts, a copy of the Implementation Guide to Natural Church Development by Schwarz and Schalk, a copy of The ABC's of Natural Church Development by Schwarz, and a "Minimum Factor Manual."

On 6 May 2001, thirty members of Creekside Community Church and I once again completed the Natural Church Development Survey following the morning worship service. The surveys were again collected, mailed to ChurchSmart, and returned with a packet of information similar to the first. While this was intended to be the mid-test, it, instead, served as the posttest since I resigned from my position as pastor of Creekside, effective 23 July 2001. I determined that I could no longer continue as the church's pastor because of existing circumstances at the church. The contributing factors that led to my resignation are a vital part of this study and will be discussed at length in Chapter 5.

Research Question 1

What is the current health of the congregation in terms of the eight quality characteristics defined by Schwarz and what effect will the strategic process of attempting to increase the health of the church have on its growth? This is a multifaceted question that will be answered in progressive steps.

The Health of Creekside in October 2000

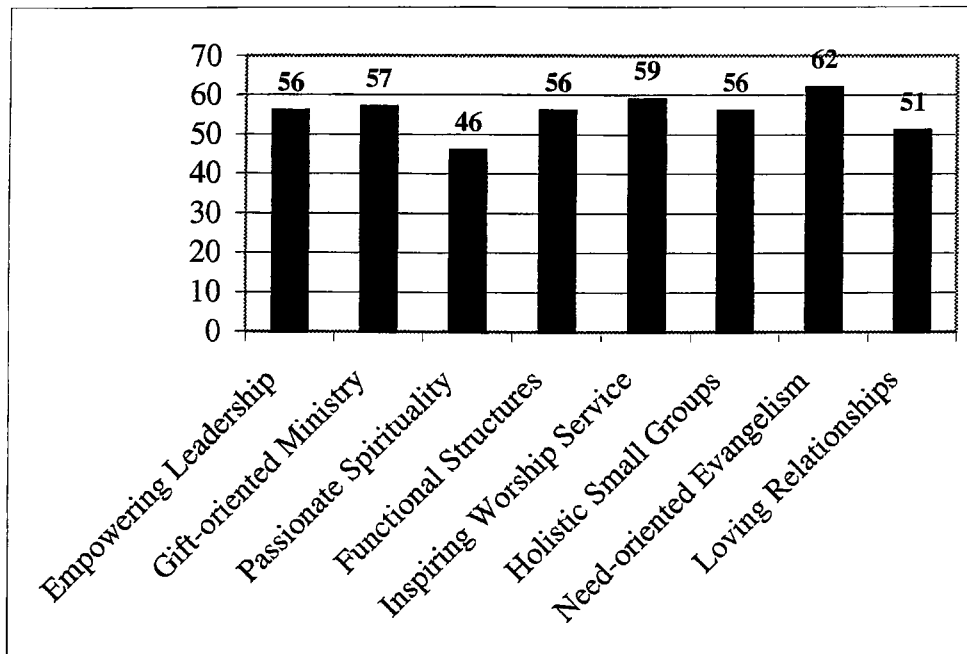
The results of the first survey taken by the pastor and thirty key lay people on 1 October 2000 are presented below in Table 4.1 and graphed in Figure 4.1.

Table 4.1

NCD Survey Results, 1 October 2000

<u>Characteristic</u>	<u>Score</u>
Empowering Leadership	56
Gift-oriented Ministry	57
Passionate Spirituality	46
Functional Structures	56
Inspiring Worship Service	59
Holistic Small Groups	56
Need-oriented Evangelism	62
Loving Relationships	51
Average	55

Figure 4.1

Graph of NCD Survey Results, 1 October 2000

The survey is normed so that the median, or “average,” score for churches in the United States is fifty. David Wetzler, General Manager of ChurchSmart Resources, notes that “seventy percent of churches taking the survey will score in the range between 35 and 65” (Letter October).

This survey revealed that all but one of the characteristics were above the national average. The average score of fifty-five is also several points above the national average. The maximum factor was need-oriented evangelism which scored sixty-two. The minimum factor was passionate spirituality, which scored forty-six. This was the only characteristic to score below the national average. The next weakest factor was loving relationships, which, at fifty-one, was one point above the national average but four points below the church’s average. These results would seem to indicate that Creekside

Community Church was a fairly healthy church at the time, slightly above the national average with good, solid scores on all of the characteristics.

The Growth of Creekside in Fall 2000

During the three-month period surrounding the survey, data was collected concerning the growth of the church (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2

Creekside Statistics for Fall 2000

Date	Offering	Nursery	Children	Worship	Total	Sm Grps	Conver.	Bapt.	New Mem.
9/3/00	\$2,912.85	5	16	88	108	34			
9/10/00	\$3,774.02	7	29	96	133	32			
9/17/00	\$4,463.26	7	31	96	134	31			
9/24/00	\$3,170.88	4	30	95	132	37			
10/1/00	\$3,237.83	8	26	104	135	29			
10/8/00	\$3,422.26	6	22	83	111	27			
10/15/00	\$5,198.39	6	31	102	139	19			
10/22/00	\$2,657.00	5	22	100	129	20	1		
10/29/00	\$4,209.00	11	26	128	167	30			
11/5/00	\$4,399.00	7	24	98	131	24			
11/12/00	\$3,025.50	3	27	92	130	29		1	4
11/19/00	\$3,456.50	5	32	113	154	38			
11/26/00	\$3,518.00	3	28	92	128	41			
Average	\$3,649.58	5.9	26.5	99.0	133.2	30.1	1	1	4

The Process of Raising the Minimum Factors

The “treatment period” began 5 November 2000. I met with Creekside’s church board who had agreed to serve as the core of the task force which would work to improve the health of the church. At that meeting I handed out packets of information containing the results of the NCD, along with a dozen pages of NCD material. These additional pages contained background information on all of the quality characteristics but more information on our two minimum factors. These pages also contained NCD’s plan to

strengthen these qualities. Unfortunately, most of NCD's resources and curriculum for improving quality characteristics are originally printed in German and not yet available in English.

The board/task force and I had a lengthy discussion of results. I encouraged them that our results were really quite good, above the national average, especially for a church that had been through as much as Creekside had in the last few years. We discussed our minimum factors and talked about what characteristics each of those factors represents. I asked the Task Force members to take a couple of weeks to read and digest the material and then to bring suggestions as to how to proceed at our next meeting.

The Task Force met again on 3 December 2000. We again reviewed the NCD survey results, and I asked for suggestions as to how we might strengthen our weakest qualities. The members had some suggestions but were quite clearly wanting to follow my lead and for me to spearhead the effort. We discussed each of the characteristics separately. Some suggestions for improving passionate spirituality included:

1. Identify and mobilize prayer warriors;
 2. Focus on gift-based ministry. Help people identify and serve according to their giftedness;
 3. I should preach a sermon series on spiritual passion;
 4. The church should hold a twenty-four hour prayer vigil;
 5. The church should begin the new year with forty days of prayer and fasting;
- and,
6. Someone could lead a twelve-week Bible study called "Prayer Life."

We had more difficulty brainstorming ideas on how to improve loving relationships. Again, the NCD material suggests using their small group/Bible study

curriculum on loving relationships, but it is not yet available in English. Some suggestions the Task Force suggested for improving loving relationships included:

1. The congregation would focus on greeting and welcoming visitors. This is everyone's responsibility;
2. Holding more all-church get-togethers including dinners for special occasions and such;
3. I should preach a sermon series on loving relationships; and,
4. Emphasis on small groups as a way for people to connect and get to know one another better.

We discussed these ideas for quite a while. Team members showed some enthusiasm for many of the ideas but little ownership at the time. Each member of the Task Force wanted to see the health of the church improve but seemed to want someone else to do the work.

I had been thinking about preaching the two sermon series and noted that I would schedule them for early in the coming year. I had also wanted to do the Forty Days of Prayer and Fasting as a way to focus the church and seek God's will and blessing on the church and its leaders and ministries.

Passionate spirituality. We decided to go ahead with a program of Forty Days of Prayer and Fasting beginning 1 January 2001. We thought it would be a great way to start off the new year (and millennium) right—seeking God, growing closer to him, and seeking his will and direction for our church as a church family. I produced a daily prayer guide that highlighted a different person in leadership, a ministry of the church, or an area of concern for everyone in the church to remember in prayer. We also had a sign-up sheet for individuals to sign up for one or more days to fast during the forty days. The fasting

worked like a relay race: one or two people fasted every day and the next day would “pass the baton off” to the next person to fast for that day. The congregation participated enthusiastically, and everyone seemed to have a positive response.

In conjunction with the Forty Days of Prayer and Fasting, in January I preached a four-part sermon series entitled “Fanning the Flame: Growing in Passion for Jesus.” For this series I began producing study questions based on the messages for the small groups to use during their weekly meetings. This gave participants the opportunity to spend more time exploring and discussing in depth what spiritual passion means and looks like in an individual’s life.

During the months of January, February, and on into the spring and summer, we worked hard to emphasize passionate spirituality and prayer with the congregation. Some of the other initiatives the Task Force and I implemented follow:

1. Emphasizing the use of the church’s Prayer Room. Bulletin boards were put up in the Prayer Room. The bulletin boards were labeled “Prayer Requests” and “Answered Prayers.” These were available for people to post prayer needs and answers to prayer.
2. Prayer groups were formed within the worship team to pray at practices and every Sunday morning before the worship service.
3. A mid-week evening prayer service was started in the summer of 2001.

Loving relationships. I followed up January’s sermon series on passionate spirituality with a three-week series in February entitled, “Opening Our Arms: Growing in Love for One Another.” This series emphasized the quality characteristic loving relationships and discussed our Christian responsibility to love one another, care for one another, and forgive one another.

Some of the other initiatives the Task Force and I implemented to try to increase

the quality characteristic loving relationships included the following:

1. Asking a woman in the church with the gift of hospitality to serve as our social coordinator. Her responsibilities included coordinating all-church dinners, socials, and special events. These included Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners, special fun nights such as a Super Bowl party, outings, and family activities including movie nights at church.

2. Initiated monthly training for small group leaders. These meetings helped to better equip the small group leaders to lead their groups and provide the kind of care and connectivity that we wanted the small groups to provide. Several new small groups were started as a result of the training.

3. Monthly small group emphasis. Once a month we would take some time during the worship service to highlight one of the small groups. The leaders of the small group of the month would spend a few minutes describing their group, who was involved, and their current topic of discussion. They would always end with an invitation to give their group, or any of the others, a try.

4. We started a weekly Sunday lunch group called “The Lunch Bunch.” This was an informal gathering for lunch at a different restaurant each week after church. Each week the bulletin announced the location of the gathering as well as an open invitation to anyone who could to come when they could and stay for as long as they liked for a time of food, conversation, and fellowship.

Difficulties along the Way

As my Dissertation Journal indicates (see Appendix B), the process of identifying and implementing ways to increase these particular quality characteristics turned out to be much more difficult than I had anticipated. Finding ideas that seemed both helpful and

practical to implement and finding people to help implement the initiatives decided upon proved to be very difficult.

Throughout the year, I was also dealing with the ongoing financial struggles the church was facing. The process of dealing with the financial problems of the church required an enormous amount of my time, attention, and energy. The process of dealing with the church's financial problems clearly kept me from investing the amount of time and energy that I would have liked to have spent working on the health of the church and from ministry tasks in general. This will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.

The Health of Creekside in May 2001

On 6 May 2001 we completed the second survey, sent the surveys to ChurchSmart for scoring, and several weeks later received the results in the mail (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3

NCD Survey Results, 6 May 2001

<u>Characteristic</u>	<u>Score</u>
Empowering Leadership	42
Gift-oriented Ministry	56
Passionate Spirituality	45
Functional Structures	44
Inspiring Worship Service	36
Holistic Small Groups	52
Need-oriented Evangelism	56
Loving Relationships	58
Average	49

Table 4.4 compares the results of the two surveys, while Figure 4.2 graphs the results.

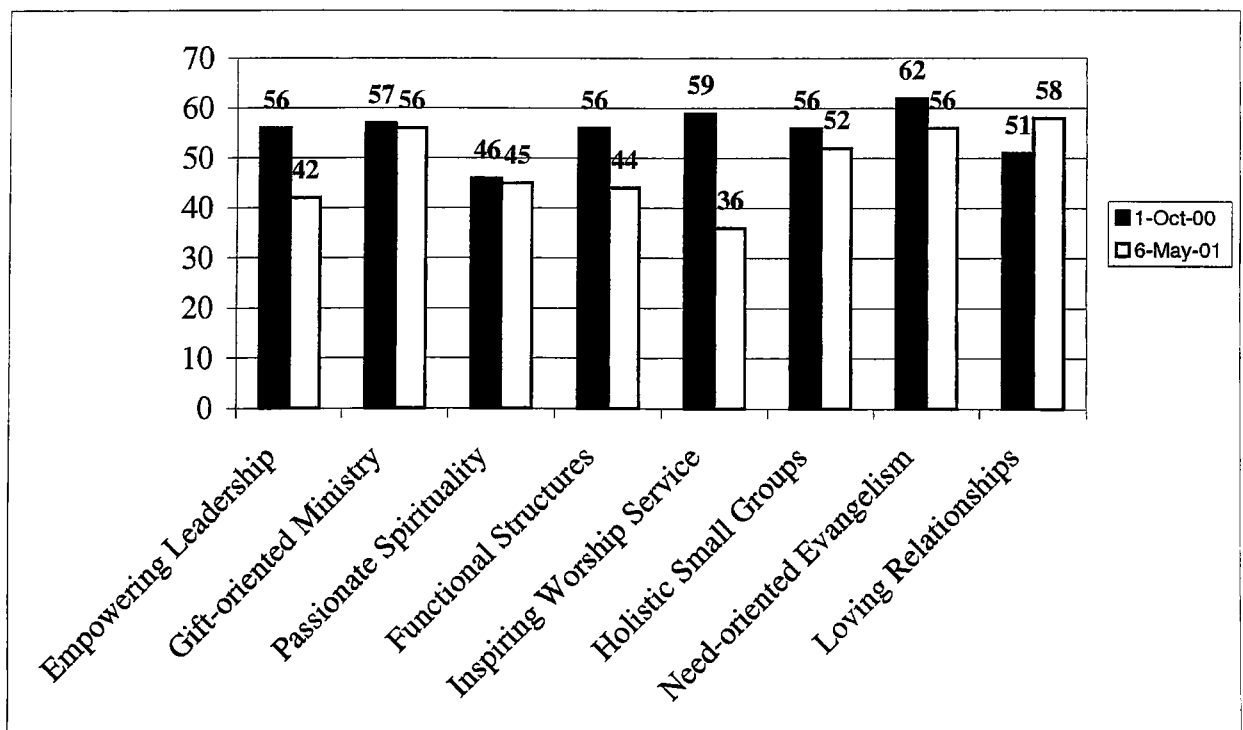
Table 4.4

NCD Survey Results Comparison

Characteristic	Score		Change
	10/1/2000	5/6/2001	
Empowering Leadership	56	42	-14
Gift-oriented Ministry	57	56	-1
Passionate Spirituality	46	45	-1
Functional Structures	56	44	-12
Inspiring Worship Service	59	36	-23
Holistic Small Groups	56	52	-4
Need-oriented Evangelism	62	56	-6
Loving Relationships	51	58	+7

Graph of NCD Survey Results Comparison

Figure 4.2



The results showed changes in every quality characteristic. The minimum factor, passionate spirituality, had lost one point, while the second minimum factor, loving relationships, had gained seven points. Loving relationships was the only characteristic to show an increase, and, in fact, had improved from being the second weakest characteristic to being the strongest. This was also due to decreases in all of the other characteristics. Inspiring worship suffered the greatest loss, twenty-three points, followed by empowering leadership and functional structures with losses of fourteen points and twelve points, respectively. The four remaining factors showed small decreases from one to seven points.

The treatment process focused on the two weakest characteristics, the minimum factors, loving relationships and passionate spirituality. For the characteristic loving relationships, the process of working to increase that characteristic did seem to improve it. It was the only characteristic to show an increase. For the characteristic passionate spirituality, the process of working to improve it did not seem to have much effect. It lost one point. I would argue, though, that the treatment for passionate spirituality was actually quite effective and was what kept it from decreasing to the extent that some of the other characteristics decreased. Passionate spirituality improved from being the minimum factor in the first survey to being the fifth strongest factor, an improvement of three places in the strength rankings of the characteristics.

The average score of the second survey was forty-nine. This showed a six-point decrease from the previous average score of fifty-five. This is a change of 10.9 percent. The new average dips one point below the national average of fifty, with four of the characteristics remaining above the average mark and four falling below average. Wetzler noted that the change in average score “is a statistically minor change from your previous

average” (Letter May).

The Growth of Creekside in Spring 2001

During the three-month period surrounding the surveys, data was again collected concerning the growth of the church (see Table 4.5).

Table 4.5

Creekside Statistics for Spring 2001

Date	Offering	Nursery	Children	Worship	Total	Sm Grps	Conver.	Bapt.	New Mem.
4/1/01	\$2,732.24	4	17	82	104	25	1		
4/8/01	\$4,732.99	8	39	102	148	25			
4/15/01	\$2,970.29	7	43	137	187	26		1	7
4/22/01	\$3,633.50	7	39	97	140	20			
4/29/01	\$2,400.00	5	34	96	138	22			
5/6/01	\$4,238.74	6	19	90	115	21			
5/13/01	\$2,685.00	6	23	97	126	21			
5/20/01	\$3,549.11	7	27	89	121	19			
5/27/01	\$2,521.95	13	14	113	138	21			
6/3/01	\$2,500.85	9	20	73	100	n/a			
6/10/01	\$4,288.00	11	19	54	76	n/a			
6/17/01	\$2,044.95	9	21	56	82	n/a			
6/24/01	\$3,112.80	8	21	84	116	n/a			
Average	\$3,185.42	7.7	25.8	90.0	122.4	22.2	1	1	7

The changes in the growth of the church are summarized in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6

Creekside Growth Comparison

	Fall 2000 Average	Spring 2001 Average	Amount of Change	Percentage Change
Giving	\$3,649.58	\$3,185.42	-\$464.16	-13
Nursery	5.9	7.7	1.8	30
Children	26.5	25.8	-0.7	-3
Worship	99.0	90.0	-9	-9
Sunday Total	133.2	122.4	-10.8	-8
Sm. Grps.	30.1	22.2	-7.9	-26
Conversions	1	1	0	0
Baptisms	1	1	0	0
New Mem.	4	7	3	43

Over the course of the treatment period, almost all of the major growth indicators in the church showed a decrease. Giving dropped by 13 percent, the total Sunday morning attendance dropped by 8 percent, and small group attendance dropped by 26 percent. Almost twice as many new members were received into the church in the spring of 2001 as in the fall of 2000, but, with one exception, all of the new members, both fall and spring, were regular attenders who finally made the commitment to join the church.

The results of the church health surveys and the statistics gathered from the church records indicate that the church was on a slow and steady decline. Graphs of the three major growth indicators further illustrate this gradual drop-off. Figure 4.3 shows the weekly offerings or giving for the treatment period.

Figure 4.3

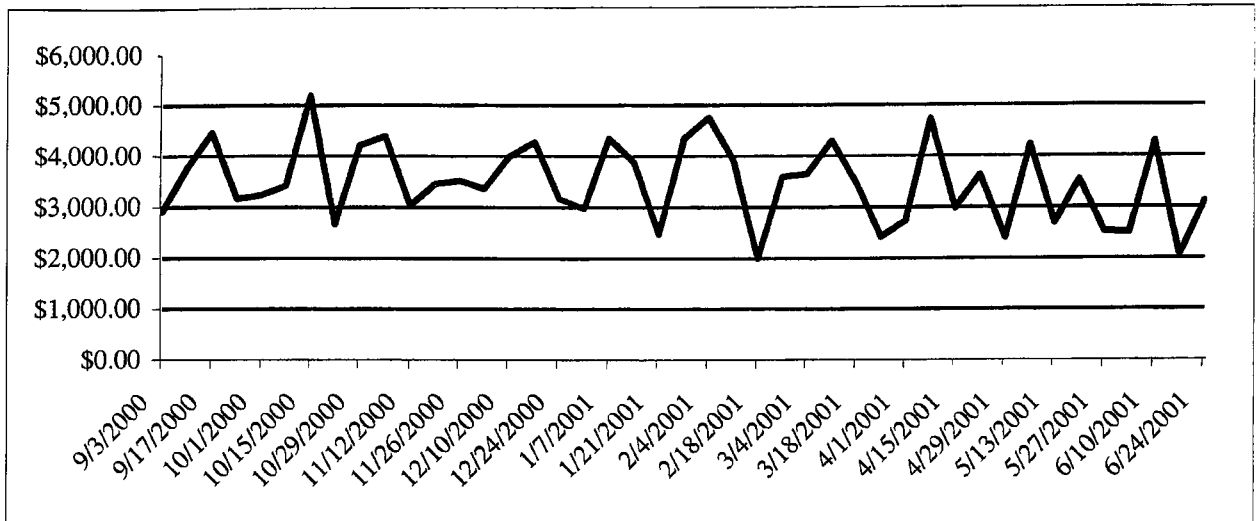
Weekly Giving

Figure 4.4 shows the weekly attendance at the Sunday morning worship service during the treatment period.

Figure 4.4

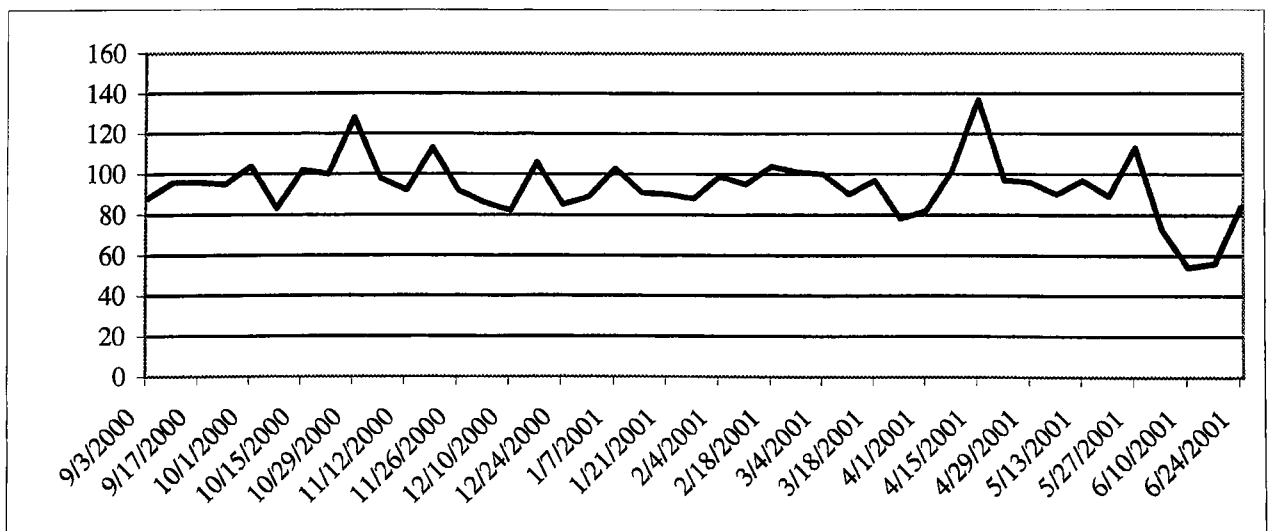
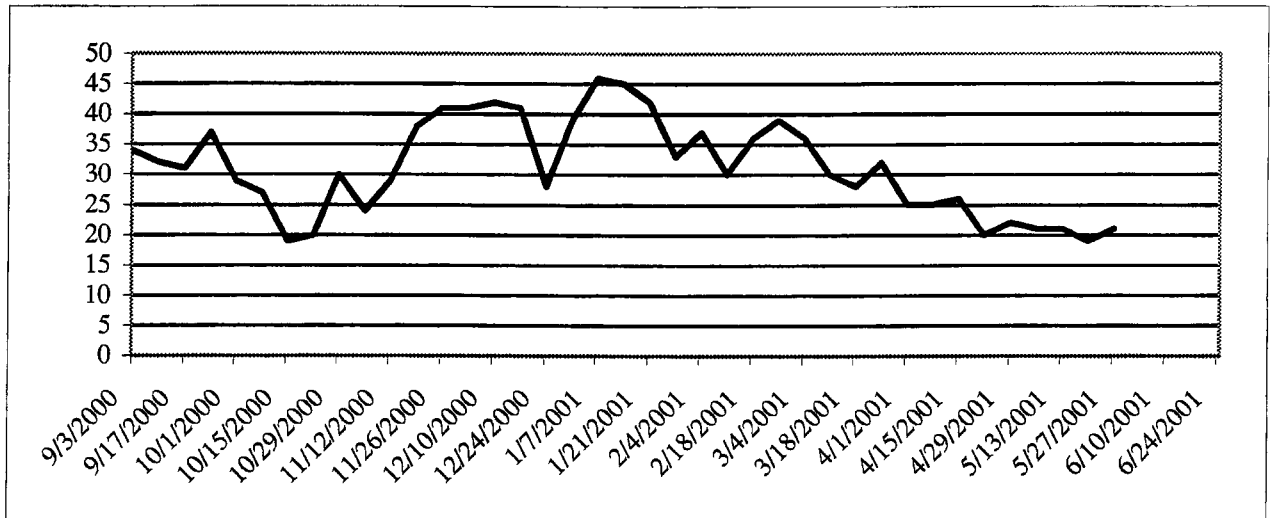
Worship Service Attendance

Figure 4.5 shows the weekly attendance at small groups meetings during the treatment period.

Figure 4.5

Small Group Attendance



The strategic process of attempting to improve the health of the church did not have an overall positive effect. While one of the characteristics, loving relationships, did see an increase, the majority of the characteristics decreased, some dramatically. Thus, as would be expected, the growth of the church did not increase either. Instead, the church seemed to be on a gradual but consistent decline. Possible explanations for this will be explored in Chapter 5.

Research Question 2

Which of the quality characteristics appear to be most closely associated with church growth?

Given the setting of the study, the circumstances involved, and the resulting

outcomes of the surveys, this question is difficult to answer. Micah Young, from the accounting firm DeLoite and Touche in Columbus, Ohio, served as my statistician, and he confirms that given the available data pinpointing one or two of the characteristics as most closely associated with church growth is difficult if not impossible.

The three qualities that had the largest decreases, inspiring worship, empowering leadership, and functional structures, certainly have an impact on the overall life of the church and are almost certainly linked to the declines in attendance, giving, and such. However, as Christian Schwarz repeatedly points out, the harmonious interplay of all the characteristics is what contributes to the health and growth of a church (Natural 11). I also believe that some overarching factors involved in this situation make pinpointing one or two characteristics as the keys to church growth difficult. These factors will be addressed in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This project's intent was to help improve the health of Creekside Community Church. Due to unforeseen circumstances, this did not happen. Drawing conclusions from the data that has been collected will tell only part of the story in this context. Other factors were at work in this study that the data does not reflect, but the explanation of which will help clarify the results of the project.

Major Findings

Several conclusions about church health, church growth and the relationship between the two can be reached based on the data collected and the other factors at work in this study.

There is More to Church Health than Meets the Eye

Wetzler notes that when a church takes the NCD Survey a second time the church typically sees five or six characteristics increase and two or three characteristics decrease. The fact that seven of Creekside's characteristics decreased and only one increased was unusual. In his letter, Wetzler wondered what factors might be at work to account for this outcome. "Is there a conflict or disagreement brewing on the philosophy of ministry in the church, direction/worship style of the church, or other unsettling issues that are contributing to the lower scores?" (Letter May) This is an insightful question that I discussed with him at some length during a phone interview. I believe a significant factor was at work within the church that led to this outcome.

The factor that played such a crucial defining role throughout the course of the project and my tenure as pastor at Creekside was the financial condition of the church. It was not until after my arrival at the church that I became aware of how bad the church's

financial situation was. I will not go into many specifics here as the financial problems of the church are reported in detail in my Dissertation Journal (see Appendix B). To summarize, Creekside was a church of about one hundred mostly blue collar people supporting nearly a million dollars in debt. Creekside owned almost ten acres of land, two parsonages, a church building, and a partially renovated warehouse. Creekside did receive income from renting some of its buildings and warehouse space to other churches and businesses, but the church still ran consistently in the red.

Soon after arriving at the church, I began to discover clues and put the pieces together as to just how bad the finances were. The weekly offerings were good for a church of that size and make-up but could not begin to pay bills that were stacked up in a folder two inches thick. Trying to control the finances and relieve the burden of indebtedness became the primary concern and focus of my ministry. Throughout my year at Creekside, I worked hard to sell property, stabilize finances, cut spending, and relieve indebtedness. I spent much more time dealing with financial problems, realtors, bankers, and lawyers than on pastoring or providing leadership for the church. Church health and ministry concerns had to take a backseat to just keeping the church alive.

Despite my efforts, bills continued to stack up, and the church existed from week to week not knowing if we were going to be able to make payroll, much less pay our basic bills. In turn, my family lived week to week not knowing if I was going to receive a paycheck, if we would be able to make our house payment, or if bill collectors would soon be knocking on our door. By early spring 2001, I could see the writing on the wall: I could not stay at Creekside much longer. This was accentuated when the birth of our daughter in mid-February coincided with the lowest offering of the year. The stress of dealing with the church finances and the trickle-down into our personal finances was

becoming too great.

The survey results of October 2000 would seem to indicate that Creekside Community Church was a fairly healthy congregation. According to Schwarz's characteristics, the church was moving in the right direction and was even a bit above the national average for church health. The survey, though, does not reveal the unrest that was just beneath the surface of the church, the changes the church had been through, and the many struggles it had endured in recent years. The survey could not reveal the financial problems that lay hidden beneath the surface and were waiting to erupt like a volcano.

In Natural Church Development Schwarz indicates that factors can be at work in a church that will cause it to grow despite having a below average quality index. Schwarz says that "quantitative growth is apparently attainable by methods other than the development of the eight quality factors" (39). He suggests effective marketing and contextual factors as possible explanations. If this is the case, could not the reverse also be true? Factors outside the realm of the eight characteristics might work to cause a church to experience quantitative decline despite a better than average quality index. I believe this is just what happened in this context.

Stated Versus Actual Values

The characteristic need-meeting evangelism had been the maximum factor on the first survey. It seemed to be the church's strongest characteristic; however, I believe that stated values do not always equal actual values, this being a case in point.

For the last several years, throughout the transitional time, the leadership and congregation had heard over and over again the importance of reaching lost people. The church had worked through a change of vision and mission, and they had heard

repeatedly the importance of reaching lost people, of reaching out to them at their point of need, of meeting them where they are, of not expecting them to come to church looking for answers they may not yet know they need. The church's new mission statement was, "Reaching out to people where they are, encouraging and equipping them to become fully devoted followers of Jesus." This mission statement had been highly publicized and even was painted on the walls of the church.

The congregation held need-meeting evangelism as a high stated priority. But little was actually done about it. Only a couple of community outreach activities had been attempted in the last several years. The leadership placed a high value on "seeker-sensitive" worship, only few seekers came to worship. Few people were making an effort to invite their un-churched friends, neighbors, or coworkers to church. So while need-meeting evangelism was a stated value, and one that I believe people sincerely held, a disconnect was happening between belief and action. The stated valued was not being lived out in real life.

I believe a couple of factors contributed to this phenomenon. First, the multitude of changes in the church had left them shell-shocked and wary of inviting friends to their church when they were not quite sure what would happen next. Would the service be traditional, blended, or contemporary? What would the preaching be like—visitor friendly or not? Would the music be an organ playing hymns or a band playing choruses? These and other questions all relating to consistency dampened outreach potential.

Second, previous community outreach events had produced little if any result and had left participants feeling disappointed and discouraged. They were wary of further efforts, lest their time be wasted and their disappointment be repeated once again. The community around the church had changed over the years, and the dominant

demographics of the church did not match the dominant demographics of the community, making outreach efforts difficult. So while the church continued to want to be a “seeker friendly” place and held that as a high value, little connection existed between that value and real life or ministry.

Aubrey Malphurs writes at length about the difficulty of implementing new values, of moving from words to deeds. He says several reasons exist that make this a difficult task including people may not feel the need to change, people typically prefer the status quo, and people have vested interests in the previous values (129). So while church members may say they accept the new values, a passive resistance to them keeps the value from being lived.

This also leads to the question, given the conditions that were present in the church at the time, “Why did Creekside score so high on the first survey?” Are the scores on the first survey artificially high, and why? I believe they may be slightly artificially high, and several factors may account for that result. First, I believe most of the members of the church simply did not know about the problems the church was facing. They were well aware of the difficult times the church had been through during the transitional years but considered most of those problems to be behind them. A sense of hope and optimism prevailed with new leadership and a fresh perspective on the church.

Second, the few people who knew of the financial difficulties did not comprehend just how severe the problems were. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Pastor Cooper preferred to deal with problems himself rather than share them with the leadership of the church. Thus, while some of the leadership may have known we were behind on some of our bills, they did not realize just how dire the financial situation was.

Third, in October 2000 the church and I were still in the honeymoon phase of my

pastorate. The congregation was still excited to have a new pastor who seemed to be a decent preacher and leader. The leadership of the church was glad to have someone willing to take charge of the emerging situation, and at that time, I was able to devote more time to the leadership of the church and in planning innovative and dynamic worship experiences. Thus, I think an inflated sense of enthusiasm existed at the time of the first survey. This was not a negative situation, but by the time of the second survey, most of the intervening factors mentioned above had been negated allowing for a more accurate assessment on the second survey.

This can also be seen in the characteristic functional structures. At the time of the first survey members of the congregation generally believed that the church's land and building were being put to good use and wise investments had been made in the acquisition and purchase of them. By the time of the second survey, the congregation had come to realize just how poor a decision it probably was to purchase the warehouse building, how financially overextended that purchase had made the church, and how little use we were actually getting out of our facilities. At the time of the second survey, we were attempting to sell some of the land and buildings to relieve some of the financial stress. The congregation almost unanimously supported the sale of the whole church campus and the move of the church to an area more suited to the church's style of ministry and outreach. Thus, the drop in the score of functional structures on the second survey probably represents a more informed understanding of the situation at the church.

The "Wet Blanket" Effect

The first research question asks whether the strategic process of working to improve the health of the church will help the church to grow. In this case, we need to ask, instead, why the strategic process of improving the health of the church did not

improve the health of the church, much less the growth.

As mentioned above, David Wetzler asked this same question in his letter included with the second survey results (May). I spoke with him on the phone and discussed our situation at some length. After I gave him a brief history of the church and its troubled recent past, he said the good news was that we were still scoring in the normal range. He noted that we were in a downward swing, and the survey results showed that people were feeling uneasy about what was happening at the church, but he said he had seen much, much worse. Wetzler said that when churches go through a crisis or trauma the first characteristic to take a hit is passionate spirituality. People tend to lose some of their faith or trust in God when a crisis hits the church. So Wetzler noted that we did not do so poorly there—just a one point loss. In fact, our efforts to improve that very characteristic probably helped to keep it where it was.

Wetzler mentioned two areas that seem key to our context. First, he said that when a problem exists in the church and the pastor's time is eaten up with simply trying to keep the church alive or afloat, the pastor's ability to focus on ministry is greatly diminished. The church is forced to enter into a survival mode rather than an effective ministry mode. This was certainly my experience at Creekside. Rather than being able to focus on doing effective ministry both in the church and in the community, I was consumed by the financial problems of the church. It felt like I was constantly on the phone with bankers, lawyers, and realtors attempting to forestall loan payments, sell portions of our building and land to ease our financial burden, and getting an education in commercial real estate law from the aforementioned realtors and lawyers. I had very little time or energy left to do the real work of ministry in the church. The church did enter "survival mode" with very little time or energy spent on new or developing ministries.

Second, Wetzler noted that until the crisis, pressures, or overarching concerns are taken care of, the use of NCD will not help a church. He said that until outside stressors are relieved, all efforts to improve church health are usually futile. When a congregation is facing financial problems, uncertainty in vision or direction, or worst of all, a moral failure has occurred in the leadership, those issues will overwhelm all attempts to improve church health. The problem, whatever it may be, will serve as a “wet blanket” on any attempts to improve the health of a congregation. All efforts to ignite a spark of health or growth will be snuffed out by the “wet blanket” of the overarching problem.

Wetzler said he has seen Creekside’s type of situation over and over. When a congregation is facing the kinds of problems mentioned above, their ability to focus on what God can do in and through the church is greatly hindered. Also, the situation becomes such a distraction for the pastor, leadership, and people of the church that it is difficult for real ministry to happen (Telephone).

This was certainly the case at Creekside. Board meetings were spent discussing the latest financial figures and efforts to sell land, rent out our facilities, and relieve debt rather than on planning ministry events and goal setting. The financial concerns did serve as a “wet blanket” over every ministry in the church and all attempts to improve health. The defining question for any ministry, initiative, or decision that was made became, “Can we afford it?” The answer was almost always, “No.” Many good ministry ideas were proposed that had to be passed up because we simply did not have the money to make them happen.

Along with that, as the congregation became aware of just how overextended the church was and the desperate need for some financial relief, I believe the congregation experienced a drop in morale. Conversations around the church shifted from excitement

about ministry and new programs to questions about how the church had gotten into such a mess and how we were going to get out of it. Pastor Cooper was not one to publicize problems in the church or let the congregation know when a problem loomed on the horizon, so much of the congregation, and even the church Board, were in the dark concerning the financial stresses that had been building for several years. My philosophy is just the opposite: information that concerns the whole church usually needs to be known by the whole church. So an educational period of about six months occurred after my arrival during which I worked to fully grasp the situation and, in turn, share it with the leadership and congregation as a whole. As people became more aware of the ongoing and serious nature of the financial problems, a sense of apprehension and unease settled over the congregation. The situation was just as Christian Schwarz described a lack of health in a church characterized by “dis-ease” (Natural 10).

As my Dissertation Journal suggests, the financial concerns of the church became a severe source of stress and anxiety in my own life. I was burdened with the financial problems at church and, in turn, concerned about the implications for my own family. The stress grew to the point that I was not leaving the problems of church at church, and I was unable to think or concentrate on anything else. I began to feel the need to break away from the situation or seriously risk a breakdown (see Appendix B).

Wetzler suggested that until the financial problems at Creekside are resolved they will continue to serve as a “wet blanket” on ministry and improving church health. Style of worship is not the issue. Going back to the old style will not solve the problem. The key is to deal with the present reality, resolve the problem, then work on making progress in the area of health (Telephone).

The Relationship between Church Health and Growth

What then, can be concluded about the process of improving the church health in this context? The Task Force and I focused our efforts on loving relationships and passionate spirituality. Loving relationships gained seven points while passionate spirituality lost one. Given the context of these changes, the results are actually quite positive. That loving relationships made a gain at all is remarkable in itself; and that passionate spirituality lost only one point given the circumstances is quite good. As noted above, in a crisis situation such as Creekside's, passionate spirituality will often suffer the greatest loss of all the characteristics. While the strategic effort to improve those two characteristics seems to have produced little positive result, the process of working to improve them may have kept these two characteristics from suffering a much greater loss.

While speculation about what further efforts could have been taken to bolster these two characteristics would be interesting, the point is moot. The overarching problems within the church would have made it very difficult for any amount of effort to produce much of a positive result. In this context, the strategic effort to improve the health of the church did not lead to growth because it did not lead to an improvement in the health of the church.

On the other hand, from the data collected we can see that church health and church growth do appear to be closely linked. While this study had been conceived with a positive outcome in mind—an improvement in health leads to growth—it has instead proved the negative corollary: a decrease in health leads to decrease in growth.

The change in the overall health of the church was from a score of fifty-five to forty-nine. This is a six-point decrease or a downward change of 10.9 percent. Looking at the three major growth indicators of the church, total Sunday morning attendance, giving,

and small group attendance, we see that they each suffered a loss, 8 percent, 13 percent, and 26 percent respectively, for an average loss of 15.6 percent. Comparing these numbers, a decrease in health by 10.9 percent and a decrease in growth by 15.6 percent, we see that they are close. The decrease in health is almost paralleled by the decrease in growth, or vice versa.

I do not believe that this is an insignificant result. While the overarching issue of the finances of the church may have put a damper on actually improving the health of the church and thus any attempt to help it grow, the financial concerns did not effect the correlation between church health and growth. Church health and growth do appear to go hand in hand. Rick Warren states emphatically, “church growth is the natural result of church health” (49). The corollary also seems to be true: disease in the church leads to decline. So the relationship seems to apply in either direction, an improvement in health and growth, or a decline in both as well.

Recommendations for Further Studies

Several recommendations for further studies come quickly to mind. First, a thorough examination of the context of the study should be conducted before beginning. An in-depth investigation for overarching problems, situations, and crises in the context, subject, and population before beginning the study itself is highly recommended. In the Creekside context, I had certainly done my research on the history of the church and the recent trouble it had gone through during the transitional years; however, it was not until after I had arrived at the church that I had any inkling of the existing financial problems, much less the trauma caused by the Purchase Plus scheme. Waiting a year to begin the study would have allowed for a greater understanding of the church, its people, and its history and allowed for a more informed study from the start.

Second, I recommend a longer treatment period between surveys to allow more time for the treatment to take effect and gain more reliable results. In my phone interview with David Wetzler, he noted that a treatment period of six months is adequate but that a full year is better. He says ChurchSmart has found that after the initial survey results are received by a church some time is required to digest the information, develop a course of action, implement it, and then see results from the effort.

Third, those who use the survey must bear in mind that the NCD Survey is purely diagnostic, not remedial. For illustration, a thermometer is an instrument that will tell a doctor a person's temperature. The thermometer does not diagnose the cause of an lowered or elevated temperature, nor does it suggest possible courses of treatment. Nor does taking a person's temperature cure the fever, it merely tells how severe the fever is. In much the same way, the NCD survey "takes the temperature" of a church along the eight quality characteristics. The survey cannot reveal the factors that led to the score a church receives, nor can it suggest the best, or any, course of action. And merely taking the survey will not cause a church to improve in quality or quantity. Anyone using the survey must bear in mind that it is a very good diagnostic tool, but that there is much work that must follow the taking of the survey that the survey itself cannot do.

Theological Reflections

If we choose to view the church as a living organism, which we have seen to be a biblically accurate portrait, I think it is important to view the whole life cycle of a church. First, just as people are conceived, nurtured in utero, and then born into the world, churches experience a similar beginning. They are conceived through the nudging of the Holy Spirit in a person's or group of people's hearts and minds. The idea is nurtured and formed until the launch date arrives and the new congregation is officially introduced to

the world.

Next, a young person grows and develops, learns and matures into adulthood. In a similar manner, we would hope that through the years any given church would grow and prosper, that it would be healthy and bear much fruit.

Are all churches, however, destined to look and be the same? I think not. Just as all people are human in terms of their species, we come in all different sizes, shapes, and colors. Does not the analogy extend to the church? All churches are members of the body of Christ, yet they too come in all different sizes, shapes, and colors. As people are destined by God to grow to a certain height or weight, are not churches possibly similarly destined? God wants all of his churches to grow, yet some churches grow to be quite large, while others may remain quite small.

Growth can take different forms. People usually reach physical maturity by their late teens or early twenties, but that does not mean they have finished growing. Reproduction, having children, is a variation of growth; it is external growth rather than internal growth. A person's body will grow only so much in a lifetime, but that internal growth is redirected to conceiving, caring for, and raising children. Growth continues through the growth of the family unit. Many churches mirror this kind of growth. They find they have reached a comfortable level of ministry at say five hundred or one thousand members, but they continue to grow by planting new churches with teams of people from the mother church. While the mother church does not seem to show any degree of growth herself, she is, in fact, growing quite dramatically through the process of daughtering churches and helping them grow.

Along life's path, a person will encounter difficulties, sickness, accidents, and injuries. These cause pain and may slow the person down for a while, but hopefully

healing and time do their job so that the difficulties in life are overcome. In a lifetime, an individual will experience times of good health and great energy and production and times of poor health and sickness when recovery is virtually all that can be considered. Churches follow the same course. They experience successes and triumphs as well as trials and setbacks, disappointments and failures. The latter may cause the church to draw back for a time, to focus inward, while healing takes place. Again, hopefully healing does take place and life and ministry go on, but for how long?

The old joke says that nothing is certain in life except death and taxes. Death, for living things, is a fact of life; death is a part of living. The death rate among people is one hundred percent. People grow old or experience fatal trauma or sickness, and life, in this world, ends. Is not the same possibly true for churches? Do churches have a life span? Does a time come when a church should look back over its life, thank God for good times and the hard, and then close its doors to make room for the next generation? If so, like people, a church's lifespan may be somewhat short or very long. Some churches die in infancy while others live on for centuries. Unfortunately, some churches limp along for years past their prime. Like a person surviving only because of life-support machinery, some churches hobble along for years, barely existing, when what needs to happen is someone, mercifully, should pull the plug and bring it to an end as ought to have been done years earlier.

Only God knows the plans he has for an individual's life, and the same is true of his Church. We humans can do only so much to help make a church healthy and make it grow, the rest is in God's hands. Like the farmer who scatters the seeds (Mark 4:26-29), we do what we can to help our churches be healthy, biblically functioning communities, but the growth is truly in God's hands—where it should be.

Conclusion

I do believe the church is a living organism and experiences a life cycle of beginning, middle, and end just as any other living thing does. The question I have attempted to address through this dissertation is how we can maximize the life and growth of a church through boosting its health. While the events at Creekside certainly did not turn out as I had hoped or anticipated, they certainly reveal a great deal about the health, growth, and life-cycle of a church. My prayer is that the difficulties that Creekside Community Church is going through will one day be looked back on as just a time of sickness, of “dis-ease,” in the life of that church from which they recovered completely and emerged the better and stronger for it.

As for the future, I look forward to continuing to use the NCD Survey and principles in my churches. While the survey does not cover every aspect of church life, I believe it does serve as a helpful barometer of the condition of a church and a source of help in improving the life and ministry of a church.

APPENDIX A

The Natural Church Development Questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR LAY PEOPLE

This questionnaire will help us discover the strengths and weaknesses in our church. It is important that you answer *all* of the questions by marking one of the indicated boxes with an X or ✓. When you come to a question in which none of the responses match your opinion, please choose the response that corresponds *as closely as possible* to your opinion. Think about our church and how it looks from your point of view at present.

The questionnaires are evaluated anonymously. Your answers will be treated absolutely confidentially. Do not write your name on the questionnaire. Please return the completed questionnaire to the person from whom you received it. Thank you very much for your cooperation.

1. How much time do you spend per week (excluding church meetings) with friends from church?

☐ Less than 1 hour ☐ 3 to 5 hours
☐ 1 to 2 hours ☐ More than 5 hours
☐ 2 to 3 hours

2. How often have you been invited by church members (not relatives) for dinner or coffee during the past two months?

☐ Not at all ☐ 4 to 5 times
☐ 1 time ☐ More than 5 times
☐ 2 to 3 times

3. How often have you invited church members (not relatives) for dinner or coffee during the past two months?

☐ Not at all ☐ 4 to 5 times
☐ 1 time ☐ More than 5 times
☐ 2 to 3 times

Approximately what percentage of your gross income do you give in tithes and offerings for church support, missions, etc.?

☐ Less than 1% ☐ 6-9%
☐ 1-4% ☐ 10%
☐ About 5% ☐ More than 10%

5. How many friendships do you have with other church members?

☐ None ☐ 11 to 20
☐ 1 to 2 ☐ 21 to 30
☐ 3 to 5 ☐ More than 30
☐ 6 to 10

6. Your gender?

☐ Male ☐ Female

7. How long have you been a Christian?

☐ Less than 1 year ☐ 11 to 20 years
☐ 1 to 2 years ☐ 21 to 30 years
☐ 3 to 5 years ☐ More than 30 years
☐ 6 to 10 years ☐ No indication possible

8. How many friendships do you have with non-Christians?

☐ None ☐ 11 to 20
☐ 1 to 2 ☐ 21 to 30
☐ 3 to 5 ☐ More than 30
☐ 6 to 10

9. Has your church sent out one or more missionaries into another culture?

☐ Yes ☐ No

10. Approximately how much time do you spend in prayer each day?

☐ Less than 10 minutes ☐ 46 to 60 minutes
☐ 10 to 20 minutes ☐ 61 to 90 minutes
☐ 21 to 30 minutes ☐ 91 to 120 minutes
☐ 31 to 45 minutes ☐ More than 120 minutes

TO WHAT DEGREE IS THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT TRUE? . . .

(For each question, check one answer only.)

	Very great extent	Great extent	Average	Hardly	Not at all	
11	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	The leaders of our church (pastor, elders, etc.) have an inspiring optimism.
12	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I know my spiritual gifts.
13	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I know that other church members pray for me regularly.
14	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I am fully informed about our church plan for church growth.
15	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Attending the worship service is an inspiring experience for me.
16	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I am a member of a group in my church where it is possible to talk about personal problems.
17	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I know that programs exist in our church which are particularly applicable to non-Christians.
18	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I find it easy to tell other Christians about my feelings.
19	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	My opinion is often asked for in my church.
20	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Our church service appeals primarily to non-Christians.
21	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I would call myself a happy and contented person.
22	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	The leaders of our church prefer to do the work themselves rather than delegate it.
23	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I enjoy the tasks I do in the church fellowship.
24	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I enjoy reading the Bible on my own.
25	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I know which goals our church will pursue in the coming years.
26	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I enjoy listening to the sermons in the worship service.
27	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I am a member of a group in my church in which others will pray with me and for me if needed.
28	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	New Christians find friends in our church quickly.
29	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	In our church it is possible to talk with other people about feelings and problems.
30	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I enjoy my life (profession, family, spare time, etc.).
31	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I consider it to be dangerous to plan and organize spiritual things.
32	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	The leaders of our church concentrate on the tasks for which they are gifted.
33	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I feel that my church supports me in my ministry.
34	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I experience the transforming influences faith has in the different areas of my life (i.e. profession, family, spare time, etc.).
35	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	It is my impression that the structure of our church hinders church life rather than promotes it.
36	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I feel that the worship service has a positive influence on me.
37	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I am a member of a group in our church in which we talk about spiritual issues.

TO WHAT DEGREE IS THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT TRUE? . . .*(For each question, check one answer only.)*

	Very great extent	Great extent	Average	Hardly	Not at all	
38	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	It is my impression that the evangelistic activities in our church lack imagination.
39	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	There is a lot of joy and laughter in our church.
40	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I have many reasons to be happy.
41	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Our pastor looks for help from lay people to complement those areas in which he is not gifted.
42	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	It is my experience that God obviously uses my work for building the church.
43	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I am enthusiastic about my church.
44	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The activities of our church are characterized by successful planning and organization.
45	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I feel that the sermon in the worship service speaks to my life needs.
46	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I am a member of a small group in which I feel at home.
47	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	When new people come to church events, we approach them openly and lovingly.
48	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The atmosphere of our church is strongly influenced by praise and compliments.
49	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The leaders of our church prefer to evade conflicts.
50	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The tasks I perform in my church are in accordance with my gifts.
51	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The Word of God is the most important authority in the decisions of my everyday life.
52	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	In our church we often try new things.
53	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	In my small group we spend lots of time with things which are irrelevant to me.
54	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	In our church the subject of evangelism is discussed at all possible opportunities.
55	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	When someone in our church does a good job I tell them.
56	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Our pastor has too much work to do.
57	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I feel my task in the church is a great challenge.
58	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Our pastor is a spiritual example to me.
59	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Very often, I have reason to thank God for His work in my life.
60	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I could write down the organizational structure in my church.
61	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The music in the church services helps me worship God.
62	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Optimal care is given to our children during church services.
63	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	In my small group we show trust towards one another.
64	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I enjoy bringing my friends, colleagues, or relatives (who do not yet know Jesus) to church.

TO WHAT DEGREE IS THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT TRUE? ...

(For each question, check one answer only.)

	Very great extent	Great extent	Average	Hardly	Not at all	
65	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	When someone in our church has a different opinion from me, I prefer to be silent rather than to endanger peace.
66	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Our pastor gives a lot of church members the opportunity to help in organizing and conducting the church service.
67	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I know what value my ministry has in the total work of the church.
68	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I firmly believe that God will act even more powerfully in our church in the coming years.
69	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The lay people of our church are trained frequently.
70	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I'm often bored in the worship service.
71	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I can be as active as I like in my small group.
72	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I pray for my friends, colleagues and relatives who do not yet know Jesus Christ, that they will come to faith.
73	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I attentively observe world events through the media.
74	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Our pastor seems to feel at home in our church.
75	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I often tell other Christians when I have experienced something from God.
76	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I consider our church to be traditional.
77	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I don't think people should clap in church services.
78	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	In our church there is a leader for each ministry.
79	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	My most important motive for attending the church service is a sense of duty.
80	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	In the groups I belong to it is easy for newcomers to be integrated.
81	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	It is hard for me to sum up in a few phrases what faith means for me.
82	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Our church does something about hunger in the world.
83	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	People in our church are highly motivated to do church work.
84	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Times of prayer are an inspiring experience for me.
85	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	When a church member is obviously in the wrong, (moral misconduct, willful disobedience, etc.) this is corrected with love, but firmly.
86	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Despite my church activities, I still have sufficient time for my hobbies.
87	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I enjoy bringing visitors to our church services.
88	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	It is the declared goal of our small groups to reproduce themselves by cell division.
89	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The various ministries of our church are helpful for my particular needs.
90	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	In our worship services new faces are a rarity.
91	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I try to deepen my relationships with people who do not yet know Jesus Christ.

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE PASTOR

It is important that you answer *all* of the questions by filling in the blanks or by marking one of the indicated boxes. When you come to a question for which none of the responses match your opinion, please choose the response that corresponds *as closely as possible* to your opinion. Think about your church and how it looks from your point of view at present.

Date:

1. Church name:

2. Church address:

3. Country:

4. Church phone number:

5. Church fax number:

6. Your name:

7. Your age:

8. Your gender:

☐ Male

☐ Female

9. Your highest level of education:

☐ Theological Studies

☐ Bible School

☐ Training on the job

☐ Other

10. Denomination:

11. Number on church membership roll:

12. Type of community where church is located:

☐ Rural

☐ Urban/Metropolitan City

☐ Other

13. What year did you become pastor of this church?

14. At present, the average total attendance at church services every week is:

15. At present, the average number of children attending church services every week is:

16. During the past five years the average total attendance at church services was:

1 year ago

2 years ago

3 years ago

4 years ago

5 years ago

17. Have you planted daughter churches?

☐ Yes

☐ No

18. If yes, how many?

19. Have you given church members to daughter churches during the past five years?

☐ Yes

☐ No

20. If yes, what year(s)?

☐ This year

☐ Last year

☐ 2 years ago

☐ 3 years ago

☐ 4 years ago

21. If yes, how many members?

This year

Last year

2 years ago

3 years ago

4 years ago

22. In our church we have church services per week.

23. What is the total number of small groups (home Bible studies, prayer groups, etc.) in your church?

TO WHAT DEGREE IS THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT TRUE? . . .

(For each question, check one answer only.)

	Very great extent	Great extent	Average	Hardly	Not at all	
24	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Our church services attract visitors.
25	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I have a written, formulated plan for the next steps of our church growth.
26	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Our church has specialized ministries for new believers.
27	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I consider it dangerous to worry too much about "feeling comfortable" in the church fellowship.
28	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I am convinced that every word in the Bible is given by God.
29	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Concerning my personality, I prefer to act on the spur of the moment without over-planning.
30	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I think it is important that the church is socially relevant.
31	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	For us, it is more important that a person attends a small group than the church service.
32	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I enjoy reading books.
33	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I enjoy church work.
34	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	The volunteer lay leaders of our church are trained for their ministries.
35	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	The leaders of the ministries of our church have frequent meetings (i.e. at least once per month) for discussion.
36	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	The leaders in all ministry areas are trained for their tasks.
37	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I know which individuals in our church have the gift of evangelism.
38	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I know about the personal problems of the core lay people.
39	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I think it is important that young and old interact in the church as much as possible.
40	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	The church should actively fight economic misery.
41	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	The planting of new churches is an important goal for us.
42	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I personally do not like church statistics very much.
43	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I think it is important that as many church members as possible are involved in church decisions.
44	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	When a lay person takes over a task, we give a written description of the task.
45	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	In our church the tasks are assigned without setting a time limit.
46	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Before or after church services, we offer opportunities for fellowship.

TO WHAT DEGREE IS THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT TRUE? . . .

(For each question, check one answer only.)

	Very great extent	Great extent	Average	Hardly	Not at all	
47	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I would love to have more free time.
48	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Sometimes we develop special tasks for certain people corresponding to their gifts.
49	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	When a new person comes into our church services they can stay anonymous if they want to.
50	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I think we Christians radiate too little joy.
51	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	When churches want to grow, it is absolutely necessary for them to set growth goals.
52	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I would rather act intuitively or spontaneously than to make plans.
53	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	When someone adapts their preaching to the needs of non-Christians they falsify the gospel.
54	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I regularly read a daily paper.
55	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I am sure that God wants our church to grow.
56	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	My work is regularly discussed and assessed by an "outside assistant" (i.e. church counselor, pastor colleague, etc.).
57	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	In the long term we are concerned that lay people take only those tasks for which they are gifted.
58	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	We have leaders for the individual ministries in our church.
59	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Our church reacts to change with skepticism.
60	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	In our church we consciously promote the reproduction of small groups by dividing them.
61	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	The church leadership supports individual Christians in their evangelistic activities.
62	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	It is important for me to regularly express praise and acknowledgement to the lay people.
63	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I am disturbed that, in my area of responsibility, people without Jesus Christ are lost for eternity.
64	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I am the type of person who likes to do it all by myself.
65	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	The church leaders (elders, deacons, board, etc.) actively support evangelism and building up the church fellowship.
66	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	The leaders of small groups or ministries each have apprentice leaders.
67	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	We set great importance on integrating newly converted people into evangelistic work.
68	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I feel that church work is a burden.
69	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	The maintenance of relationships with individual church members is more important for me than planning or organizing activities.

70. How many friendships do you maintain with people inside the church?

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> None | <input type="checkbox"/> 11 – 15 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 – 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 16 – 20 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3 – 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> 21 – 30 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 6 – 10 | <input type="checkbox"/> More than 30 |

71. How many friendships do you maintain with people outside the church?

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> None | <input type="checkbox"/> 11 – 15 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 – 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 16 – 20 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3 – 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> 21 – 30 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 6 – 10 | <input type="checkbox"/> More than 30 |

72. How long have you been a Christian?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 1 year | <input type="checkbox"/> 11 to 20 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 to 2 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 21 to 30 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3 to 5 years | <input type="checkbox"/> Longer than 30 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 6 to 10 years | <input type="checkbox"/> No indication possible |

73. The music style of our church can be described as follows: (check all that apply)

- | |
|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Modern |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Traditional |
| <input type="checkbox"/> With organ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Without instruments |
| <input type="checkbox"/> With percussion instruments |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Worship songs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Songs with an evangelistic message |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spontaneous |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Planned |

74. Our church has publicly announced a goal for the number of congregational members (or worship attenders) we would like to have by a given date.

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

75. My leadership style can be described best as: (check all that apply)

- | |
|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Authoritarian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Partnership |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Democratic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Task-oriented |
| <input type="checkbox"/> People-oriented |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Goal-oriented |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Serving |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Relationship-oriented |

76. Which of the following slogans would describe you best? (check all that apply)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Evangelical | <input type="checkbox"/> Pentecostal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fundamentalist | <input type="checkbox"/> Charismatic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Liberal | <input type="checkbox"/> "Third Wave" |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Liturgical | <input type="checkbox"/> Politically engaged |

77. Which of the following would you identify as your spiritual gifts? (check all that apply)

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership | <input type="checkbox"/> Pastoral service |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Faith | <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Counseling | <input type="checkbox"/> Evangelism |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Organization | |

78. What percent of your congregation use their gifts for building up the church?

- | |
|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 10 percent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 10 to 25 percent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 26 to 40 percent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 50 percent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 60 to 80 percent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> More than 80 percent |

79. What percent of your congregation is integrated into small groups?

- | |
|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 10 percent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 10 to 25 percent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 26 to 50 percent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 51 to 75 percent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> More than 75 percent |

APPENDIX B

Dissertation Journal

July 17, 2000, Monday—This is my Dissertation Journal. It is intended to be a record of events, changes, and observations I make throughout the course of the data-gathering portion of my dissertation. I think, though, it will be much more. I have not kept a journal in this fashion before, and it will be interesting to document my experiences here at Creekside. We are very excited to be here and hopeful for what the future has in store. I am getting a little nervous, though, about the finances at the church. My secretary, Michelle, keeps telling me how far behind we're getting in our bills and that it's really good the offerings have been as good as they have been these few weeks I've been here. We'll see what happens. Anyway, God has blessed us with a new job, a great house, and, we just found out, a new baby on the way! We are really excited about what the coming year has in store for us!

August 14, 2000, Monday—I have inherited a financial disaster. Had to go before the church yesterday and tell them how in debt we are. I can't believe what a mess this place is! End of last week the church Board and I attended Willow Creek's Leadership Summit conference—had a great time, but spent most of the free time discussing the church's finances. We are so in debt it is unbelievable! We have a million dollar mortgage, another \$25,000 loan from the Wesleyan church, credit card debt (if you can believe that) and bills up to our ears! The church is supposed to have about \$14,000 in the bank in designated (encumbered) funds, but they've already spent all that! So yesterday, before the offering, I had to stand before my new congregation and tell them just how messed up things are. I had graphs of giving, charts showing our debt, and all the reasons I could figure out that got us into this mess. I had to tell them that the

church's mortgage (almost \$9000 per month) is due tomorrow and we have less than \$200 dollars in the bank. I have been praying for a miracle all week. The bank already allowed us to make a late payment last month, but won't do that again.

Anyway, after my little presentation, I told the people that I'd been praying all week for a miracle, like a big unexpected check in the mail, but felt God wasn't going to do that. Instead he was probably going to work a lot of little miracles as we each prayed about what we could do in this situation. Then I prayed and we collected the offering (I wasn't expecting much, attendance was terrible, about 65 people). I then tried to preach a decent sermon, but I was a bit distracted. After church, the ladies who counted the offering came running up to me waving a little piece of paper in my face. I looked at the numbers, but they were scrawled so poorly I couldn't figure out what they meant. One of the ladies said, "I knew you'd be speechless!" I asked her what the numbers meant. The offering was just over \$10,000!!! We did get our miracle! I'm not sure how, but we did! At least we'll be able to pay the mortgage and payroll this week. I just hope we don't have to keep doing this all year long!

September 12, 2000, Tuesday—I've been meeting with the church Board who will also serve as my Research and Reflection Team. We've met several times to discuss my dissertation, the NCD surveys, and what I need to do to get the whole thing done. They seem to understand and are excited about the help the surveys should be to the church. We are in the process of contacting people to take the first round of surveys early next month.

October 1, 2000, Sunday—We administered the first survey today, immediately following the morning worship service. Everyone met in the fellowship hall. I gave a brief introduction to NCD, church health, and the survey. We circulated the surveys and

we had a few more people than surveys. Everyone seemed to enjoy taking the surveys and there was a bit of joking and laughing as people read through and answered the questions. I asked for volunteers to serve on the Task Force to help work on increasing our two lowest factors, whatever they may be. A few people were interested but no solid volunteers.

October 11, 2000, Wednesday—The survey results arrived from ChurchSmart. I was delayed in returning the surveys because we needed to gather some information about the church to include on the pastor's survey (attendance from the last few years, etc). I was quite pleased with the results. We scored an average of 55, which is pretty good, 5 points above the national average. Our highest characteristic is Need-meeting Evangelism. I was surprised by the minimum factors. I was expecting small groups to be one of our weaker areas, but they were not. Our lowest characteristic is Passionate Spirituality. The second lowest is Loving Relationships. These two areas are going to be quite a challenge to work on. It will take some time to digest the results and come up with an action plan for the months ahead.

October 25, 2000, Wednesday—I need to mention in here about Purchase Plus. Purchase Plus is a pyramid scheme in the guise of a home business partnership. It has taken me weeks of asking questions of lots of people to figure out just how this thing works. I think I have it: People buy "Distribution Centers" for \$400 each. With that they get a bunch of useless paperwork and a long-distance phone card worth \$40. In return, a couple of months later they get a check from Purchase Plus for almost twice what they "invested." You can sell the phone card, but it obviously doesn't make you any money. I kept asking people what was the product they were selling, and the answer I kept getting was very elusive, with the emphasis being it wasn't important what or how much you

sold, the key was recruiting more people to sell under you because you received a portion of their proceeds. This is a classic pyramid scheme. I can't believe so many people bought into it.

Here's the history: Pastor Cooper and the vicechair of the Board (head layperson of the church), Jim Williamson got everyone involved. Jim works for PP (a national company). He convinced Cooper it would be a good way for people to make money and they could encourage people to give half (or some percentage) of whatever they made to the church. So Cooper started pushing it hard among the people of the church. A lot of people bought into it. I hate to sound discriminatory, but it was mostly the blue-collar folks without much education who got sucked in. Most of the better-educated folks avoided it and actually raised quite a fuss over it. Some left the church. I would have. There was quite a fight over the whole thing. Some people said PP was going to save the church, others said it would ruin it. People really got upset when there would be more people at church on Sunday evening for a PP meeting than in the morning for worship.

The whole situation is a serious violation of pastoral trust and authority—Cooper wielding his influence (and it was considerable, apparently he is quite the salesman) to get church members involved. It is certainly unethical and possibly illegal. Jen wants to see Cooper stripped of his credentials, prosecuted, and thrown in jail. I can't say I disagree.

Anyway, things went well with PP for a while. People were making money, they gave lots of money to the church to pay for new equipment and furnishing, and people were getting deluded with visions of new homes, independent wealth, and money flowing in for nothing. The folks who were making money actually laughed at and made fun of

the ones who didn't get involved. They told them they were missing out on the deal of a lifetime.

Well, that all came to a screeching halt about January 2000 when PP announced they had gotten a little over extended and needed more time to pay people their "dividends." Of course no one was paid from that time forward. People lost money, lots of it. Many in the church lost thousands of dollars, some lost over 10 thousand, one family lost their life savings, over 50 thousand bucks! What a mess!

Of course, Cooper announced his resignation shortly thereafter. Williamson and his family still come to church every week. He still works at PP. I don't know how they can show their faces here after all the harm they have caused. He says everyone knew it was an investment risk, no one was forced to participate, and sometimes investments go bad (in other words, it's not my fault). I'm debating what to do about him.

Anyway, Purchase Plus officially closed their doors a few days ago, officially ending everyone's hopes of getting any of their money back. Williamson is still working there while things close down. The Attorney General is investigating the company. This has been a really bad thing for this church. Instead of helping it, as some hoped it would, it has really done inestimably more damage than anyone probably realizes, including me.

I don't know where to turn for help with this situation. Back in the late summer, Jennifer and I were invited by Jeff Mansel, our District Minister (superintendent), to an orientation and lunch for new pastors in the district. We were able to spend some time alone with him while we drove to lunch. We quickly brought up our concerns about Purchase Plus and asked if he was familiar with the operation. He said he was. In fact, Cooper had recruited him to invest! He had invested once in the scheme, made some

money, and got out. Jen and I were shocked and devastated. The one guy we thought could help had been recruited by the enemy! We didn't know what to do or say. Don't know that he's going to be much help in dealing with this situation.

November 6, 2000, Monday—Met with board/task force yesterday. Handed out chart of NCD survey results, along with a dozen pages of excerpts from NCD material. We had a lengthy discussion of the results. I encouraged the board that our results were really quite good and that we are off to a good start. We discussed the two lowest areas briefly and talked about what each of those characteristics is about. The additional pages I gave them contained info on all of the characteristics, but more info on the two weakest characteristics. These pages also contained NCD's plan to strengthen these qualities (mostly used their curriculum which is not yet available in English). I asked the board members to take a couple of weeks to digest the material and bring suggestions as to how to proceed at our next meeting.

November 13, 2000, Monday—Last night had an all-church Thanksgiving dinner. Lots of fun, tons of food, great attendance. Everyone really enjoyed the meal together, and then we had some informal games and fun. Really seemed like a bonding time for the church—can you say, Loving Relationships?

December 4, 2000, Monday—Met with Advisory Board/Task Force yesterday. Discussed NCD survey results again and asked for suggestions as to how we might strengthen our weakest qualities (Loving Relationships and Passionate Spirituality).

Suggestions for Passionate Spirituality:

mobilize prayer warriors,

focus on Gift-based Ministry,

a sermon series on each quality,

24 hour prayer vigil,

40 days of prayer and fasting as a church,

12 week Bible study “Prayer Life.”

Suggestions for Loving Relationships:

focus on visitors—everyone’s responsibility,

all church get-togethers (special occasions, dinners, etc),

emphasize small groups.

We discussed these ideas for quite a while. There was some enthusiasm for many of the ideas, but little ownership at this time. I was planning on doing the sermon series and will schedule them for early this year. I had also wanted to do the 40 Days of Prayer and Fasting as a way to focus the church and seek God’s will and blessing on the church. May have to start that at the beginning of the new year. Not many suggestions for the Loving Relationships. NCD suggests using their curriculum on developing loving relationships, but I called them and it is not yet available in English and they didn’t know when it would be. Not much help there.

December 6, 2000, Wednesday—We have decided to go ahead with a program of 40 Days of Prayer and Fasting beginning January 1, 2001. It will be a great way to start off the new year (and millennium) right—seeking God, growing closer to him, and seeking his will and direction for our church as a church family. We will have a prayer guide that each day will highlight a different person in leadership, ministry of the church, or area of concern for everyone to pray for. We will also have a sign up sheet for everyone to sign up for one or more days of fasting throughout the forty days (it will be a relay fast, just like a relay race).

In conjunction with that, in January I will be preaching a four-part sermon series entitled, "Fanning the Flame: Growing in Passion for Jesus." We will follow that up in February with a three or four week series on growing in love for each other.

This will be a great way to start the New Year with an emphasis on growing in passion for Jesus in conjunction with our 40 Days of Prayer and Fasting.

December 19, 2000, Tuesday—I am beginning to realize just how mixed up this church is, and it is getting a little depressing. The church finances continue to be in a shambles. The church exists from week to week with no savings in the bank and bills piling up. We barely stay ahead of the bills. Actually we don't—we pay those that are most immediate, utilities and such, and let the rest stack up. There are also deep emotional and relational wounds among the people. Purchase Plus has really screwed this place up. Could take years to recover from it completely. We have put the old church building and parsonage on the market. I am hoping we can sell them quickly, which would help us overcome some of our financial problems (it would reduce our debt and our monthly mortgage). I am having lunch tomorrow with Juan Woods, the pastor of Triumphant Christian Church, which meets in and rents our old building, to see if they are interested in buying it.

December 20, 2000, Wednesday—Had lunch with Juan. Long conversation. Told him about our financial problems. He's very sympathetic and expects that we will have a breakthrough soon. Interested in buying the building, but just the church, not the parsonage. I don't think we could split them up. Juan is very encouraging.

I had an epiphany after lunch. I am either a total idiot for taking this job and inheriting this mess and I totally missed God's will, or God must think I'm an absolute

genius and can fix this mess (with his help, of course). I hope it's the genius part, but I'm afraid it's the other.

Called our realtor and told him we need to stir some interest in the old church building. Told realtor to put up a sign advertising the sale. He thought that was a great idea (had not been done before in courtesy to Pastor Woods—so much for that, we have to sell the place).

December 29, 2000, Friday—We are all set to begin the year with our Forty Days of Prayer and Fasting. We made up a sign-up sheet for the fasting—asking people to sign up to fast for one or two days out of the forty. I was worried for a while because the sheet was not filling up too quickly. Checked it after church Sunday and it was almost full! This Sunday we are having a special praise and worship service (lots of music and singing) and it will also serve as the Kick-Off for our spiritual emphasis for the New Year. This Sunday I'm going to talk briefly about why we pray and fast and what we hope to accomplish through this time (growing closer to God, seeking his will for our church, seeking his blessings on the leadership and ministries of the church). The Prayer and Fasting will coincide with a 4 week sermon series entitled: "Fanning the Flame: Growing in Passion for Jesus."

January 18, 2001, Thursday—Had a meeting with Jeff Mansel, District Minister. Wanted to update him on the financial situation at church and discuss selling church property (all of it), and relocating to Pickerington area. Discussed previous Wesleyan church plant efforts—tried two times, both folded. Would district consider us as a plant? Talked with planter guy, using available resources and training. Everyone seems very optimistic.

January 22, 2001, Monday—Had a special Board meeting last night to discuss the real possibility of selling all our property and relocating. The church doesn't fit the community. The churches all around us growing, all African-American. Repeated outreach efforts over the years have produced minimal results. Discuss moving church, all in favor except one. Decide we need to inform congregation.

February 5, 2001, Monday—Started new sermon series yesterday: "Opening Our Arms: Growing in Love for One Another." Loving relationships was our next weakest characteristic so we are going to spend three weeks talking about what it means to love each other. For this series and the last, I have been producing study questions for the small groups to use during their weekly meetings. The questions allow the groups to discuss each week's topic in depth, and discuss how they can apply the message to their lives, their groups, and the church. Seem to be well received.

February 14, 2001, Wednesday—Sunday night we had an all-church dinner and celebration/business meeting. The purpose was twofold: 1) to celebrate the end of the Forty Days of Prayer and Fasting, and 2) to update everyone on our financial situation and share my vision for the future. We had a good turn-out for a business meeting (over 60). I was very nervous before the meeting—not sure how people were going to respond. Overall response seemed very positive. I began the meeting by sharing my vision for the church. I read my vision statement and talked briefly about my hopes and dreams for the church, that I want us to be a growing, thriving place of ministry and worship.

After sharing my vision for the church, I expressed my frustration that we are enjoying great worship services (good music, good preaching, drama, multimedia, etc.; things some of my colleagues only dream about right now) but that we have few visitors and little or no growth. Financially our hands are completely tied. Every penny we bring

in goes to pay the mortgage and bills. Absolutely nothing left over for any kind of real ministry or outreach. I told everyone just how in debt we are, and how far behind we have been in our weekly giving (compared to what we need to make the budget).

I then discussed the possibility that our problem might be our location, that we need to consider relocating the church to an area that more fits the church's demographics and style of worship. This suggestion prompted some lively discussion, most of it positive and level-headed. For some people this was an "Ah-ha!" moment. They had been feeling the same frustrations but couldn't figure out what the problem might be, and location seems the logical answer. I emphasized that the last thing I wanted to do was to put the church through more upheaval and conflict by making another radical change, but that we had to consider the big picture and long-term viability of the church.

I closed the meeting after the discussion of relocating wound down. We did not take any kind of a vote regarding the sale of the building or the possibility of relocating; the meeting was to be purely informational. After the meeting, peoples' reactions seemed to be mostly favorable.

March 9, 2001, Friday—Had a very bad week last week. The week before was great—our second child was born, a healthy little girl, Danae Rachelle Jarrett, on Monday, February 19, 2001. She was 6 pounds, 11 ounces, 19 ¾ inches. She was born by planned C-section. Jen and Danae are both doing well. They spent four days in the hospital before coming home. I didn't have to preach the following Sunday due to a divinely timed guest singing group from Indiana Wesleyan University which was booked months ago, long before we had a clue about a due date.

Anyway, coming back to work the next week was really depressing. The day before Danae was born we had our worst offering ever (less than \$2000, when we need to

average \$4600/week to meet the budget) and I was really worried we weren't going to be able to make payroll. The bills continue to stack up. The next Sunday's offering wasn't much better. I was really ready to call it quits and find a church with a lot fewer problems (or a new career altogether). I also had a lady from the church come into my office demanding to know if we had any ministries at this church, and why we didn't have more. She answered her own question by telling me that they used to have lots of ministries before the previous pastor changed everything and drove everybody away. I tried to explain our financial predicament to her and explained that this was a year of rebuilding and strengthening the ministries we do have, before we try to add on a lot more. She had lots of ideas of things we could do if we just had the people to do them, and I agreed that they were some good ideas, and she should feel free to start organizing them. I don't think that's what she wanted to hear.

So, I spent a good deal of last week in the sanctuary and prayer room praying and crying out to God, weeping over the situation I had gotten myself and my family into. I sometimes wonder if I didn't make a big mistake in accepting this position. I interviewed here a week before we had to move out from Beeson, and I knew it might not be the best fit, but it was also my last lead. It was Creekside or start looking again from scratch (maybe moving in with my parents in the meantime). So it may have been a desperation job acceptance, but I had no idea the problems and challenges I would be facing.

This week I'm feeling a bit better, not quite so hopeless and depressed. Sleep deprivation from the new baby probably played a bit of a role in it all too. Got to see Dan Bilkert and Brian Law yesterday too (a pair of fellow Beeson pastors who live nearby; we get together once a month for accountability, idea exchanges, and a bit of fun). I don't

know what I'd do without those guys! It makes such a difference to be able to tell someone what you're going through and feeling.

We still have a huge pile of bills to pay (we pay off a few, and new ones keep coming in, but we can never get all the way above water), and I'm not sure what the future holds for the church or me and my family, but we'll stick with it a little longer.

April 10, 2001, Tuesday—Improving church health is turning out to be harder than I thought. Of course, there have been some distractions along the way, the main one being keeping the church afloat financially. We continue to struggle. Offerings have been mediocre to poor. In March I did a sermon series entitled “Money Matters.” It was four weeks on God's view of money: thinking clearly about money, earning it honestly, giving it generously, and spending it wisely. We wrapped up the series by having a financial planner, who is a Christian, come in and do a Saturday morning seminar on personal finances with plenty of time for questions and answers. The whole thing was very well received, and I have had lots of comments from people on how helpful the series was and the steps they are taking to get their own finances straightened out.

Financial problems are a theme here at Creekside. I'm not usually into this kind of stuff, but I'm beginning to really wonder if there isn't a spirit of bad finances on this place—kind of a financial curse brought on by something someone in leadership once did (the sins of the father visited upon the sons?). I don't know, but it seems that everything that can go wrong financially does around here. I think I may need to get out of here before it hits us personally.

The church itself has deep financial problems, as do many of the members. The two are obviously intertwined, but more so than usual because of so many church people

getting involved in Purchase Plus through the leading of Cooper, and the financial difficulty and ruin that brought to many of their lives.

All that to say, just keeping the church afloat has been a distraction from spending as much time on improving its health as I would like. My task force has run out of ideas, for now, too. We got off to a good start. There was very good participation in the Forty Days of Prayer and Fasting, and some of the social events and emphasis on small groups have helped in the area of loving relationships, but we have run out of gas. The financial problems are simply overwhelming everything else.

As I have had some time to get to know and better understand the history of the church and the changes that have taken place in the more recent past, I can see why Loving Relationships scored so low on the test. The congregation has been hurt a lot. Many of them feel like Pastor Cooper betrayed them and pushed them out of ministry—which, it seems to me, he did. During the transitional time, he told many people, mostly older folks, that they needed to step down from the ministry they were doing to allow younger people to do those jobs. He was obsessed with presenting a young face to the congregation. So a lot of people got hurt that way.

Then the whole Purchase Plus mess was a huge violation of ethics and trust. People were divided over it from the start. Some thought it would save the church, others thought it would be its ruin, and they really fought over it. When it was going good, people who were in it made fun of people who were not, and asked them how they could be so stupid as to not get in on such an easy, good thing. A good thing until it collapsed and people lost tens of thousands of dollars. Then the tables were turned, and I don't think there was a lot of gloating from those who elected not to get involved, there was a severe breach of trust and loss of respect for Pastor Cooper and the vicechair of the

Board, Mr. Williamson, who is an officer at PP and got the church involvement started in the first place.

For the last few months PP investors have been fighting to get their money back through credit card refunds (which they were promised they could do when they first invested, “Just in case anything goes wrong” they were told) and PP and Williamson are fighting them all on that. I don’t know how the Williamson family has the guts or the nerve to continue to show up for worship here. It creates more than a little tension for many people. And others have left the church over it (the whole PP scheme and the pastor’s and Williamson’s involvement).

All that to say, there are a lot of relationships in this church that need healing, and some wounds that are very deep. People get mighty sensitive when it comes to money.

May 1, 2001, Tuesday—We have had some interesting developments concerning the sale of our current building. A week ago yesterday evening, a group from a church came through our building and spent several hours looking around. They even brought their banker with them. They were very excited about the building, and the Byers, the Oberts and a few others and I were here until 11:30pm chatting with them. The pastor, George Ware, seemed like a very nice guy and said he would definitely be making an offer on the building. He also expressed interest in sharing space with us, beginning as soon as possible. They are sharing space with a church near Cooper Stadium (on the west side of Columbus) and their current situation is no longer meeting their needs.

Side note: during our time at church last night, I asked Paul Byer (who also worked at PP for a while and was friends with Williamson) if he had talked with the Williamsons lately and where they had been (haven’t seen them in church for a while). He said they had decided to find another church; it was just too weird for them to keep

coming here after all that had happened with Purchase Plus. Praise the Lord! There's one situation handled!

Sure enough, the middle of last week I had an offer on my desk: \$1.333 million. (We have it listed at \$1.575 million.) Not bad, but not great, especially since they want the place fully furnished, including all furniture and equipment. Over the weekend I discussed the offer with several Board members and we all agreed it was not even worth considering seriously. In fact, I had decided that not only would we decline the offer, but we would also take the building off the market. I thought we'd wait a year or so to see how God would lead us. (To move, or not to move. That is the question.)

So yesterday morning I called RK, our realtor, and told him that we were not going to even respond to the offer and that we wanted to take the building off the market. This, of course, was not good news to him, but I explained some of our thinking and expressed my appreciation for all of his work. He asked me to not make any decisions too quickly, and that he thought the church that made the offer was pretty serious, and he'd call me in a couple of days. Well, he called me yesterday afternoon. He asked if he could stop by the church and drop off a new offer, which he did.

RK came by about 4pm and explained that he had called Pastor Ware that morning, told him we were flat out rejecting his offer, and that we were considering taking the church off the market. Well, that got their attention (unintentionally, on my part). So RK put on my desk a new offer along with a letter of intent to lease. The new offer for the building is \$1,527,750.

This, needless to say, is a much more interesting offer. There are also several interesting options:

First, Pastor Ware understands that we are not yet prepared to move nor know exactly where we might move to. If we sell the building to them, they are willing to let us stay for up to 18 months just as we are and share the building with them (we would be renting our own building, with none of the headaches of ownership). This way, we could have the sale in hand, but not be rushed to find a new home.

Second, they would like to start renting from us as soon as possible. They are requesting use of the sanctuary, fellowship hall, kitchen, and nursery and toddler rooms on Sundays from 1:30pm - 6:30pm, and Fridays from 7:30pm - 11pm. We can negotiate on a rental rate.

We have a serious offer on the table. I am pretty sure we could get our full asking price if we decide to sell. The question is this: Are we ready? Is the congregation ready? If we bring this before the congregation, will there be support, or will this cause more problems and division? Is God opening the doors for us to move?

In some ways this is very good news, in other ways, it brings some problems into immediate focus that I was hoping to put off until later, namely, going before the congregation and having them vote on whether or not to move.

May 3, 2001, Thursday—Okay, we're getting ready to do the second round of the survey this Sunday. Who knows what the results will be like? I'm curious to see. I don't know if we've made an impact on the areas we were hoping to improve, if we helped some areas, or if we'll see a slide in any or all areas. Judging from our measurable statistics (attendance, offering, conversions, baptisms) we've been pretty flatlined. No increases, but no major decreases either. I'm planning on asking, when we take the survey, for any volunteers to form a new task force to work on our focus areas. No matter

what the survey results, we will continue to focus on Passionate Spirituality and Loving Relationships.

May 7, 2001, Monday—Took the survey yesterday. Asked for volunteers to be on task force; no one volunteered. Not too surprising, we have a real problem with volunteerism (as do many churches). The people who are willing to work are doing too much, while others do nothing and refuse to be involved.

Also had a church Board meeting last night. We discussed the purchase and lease offer as discussed above. The Board voted to hold a special congregational meeting to present our current financial problems and to discuss and vote on selling our building and relocating. The Board is pretty excited about the offer and hopeful we can present this to the congregation in such a way as to help them see and understand our needs as a church. I have been working on a letter to the congregation, which will do just that and prepare them for the meeting. The meeting will be in two weeks.

May 21, 2001—Had the special business meeting last night. It went fairly well. We had about two hours of discussion about the current financial situation, our ability to minister in this community, and our hope and vision for the future. The discussion was pretty level-headed although it did get emotional at times. In the end, the congregation voted to put the building on the market and form a relocation committee. The vote was 31 for, 1 against, 1 abstain. While that is clearly a landslide vote of approval, I am concerned that there were not more people there to discuss and vote.

These developments really put me in a difficult situation. On the one hand, this is exactly what we wanted and hoped for when we first came to the church. We wanted to sell the building and relocate to an area that would better fit the demographics and style of worship of the congregation. On the other hand, Jen and I can't imagine staying much

longer and have no desire now to make this move and restart this church almost from scratch. I feel very conflicted about this. Some days I can't wait to get out of here, and other days I can see us staying and working to make it work. This is not good. Not good for my health or my mind.

May 23, 2001, Wednesday—Survey results arrived today. Okay but not great. Small declines in six out of eight characteristics, large decline in one characteristic (inspiring worship), small increase in one characteristic (loving relationships). Looking back at the year, I'm not too surprised at the across-the-board decrease. I personally, and we, as a church, have been able to put very little effort into growing and improving the ministries and health of the church. I have been consumed by the financial problems we have been facing. I have learned more this year about realtors, lawyers, and bankers than I ever wanted to know. Overall our scores are still very strong. I am disappointed to see the declines, but they are not very big and it is not unexpected given the situation over the last year.

I am pleased to see the rise in Loving Relationships. That is very good. I hope we could attribute that to some of the work we have done. People have noted that there does seem to be a more welcoming, friendly atmosphere.

I am most surprised and disappointed in the drop in inspiring worship. It is a big drop and is significant. I thought that the one thing we were doing well were our worship services. This one is kind of hard not to take personally (even though they say not to) because it is the one area I have the most control over. Our worship team really prides itself on putting together excellent worship services that we think honor God and allow people to come into his presence to worship him and be touched by him. That there was such a drop in that score indicates that either 1) we are really out of touch with the needs

and desires of the congregation, 2) other people don't find the services as inspiring or worshipful as those helping to plan them, 3) the most recent services have been a little off, thus skewing the score, or 4) people are coming to worship with a bad attitude and aren't inspired because they don't want to be.

I have been feeling for some time that there is a definite disconnect between me and many of the people in our church; that my style of preaching/teaching is not the most effective for this congregation. I am much more of a teacher than a preacher. Despite our contemporary format and desire to be "seeker sensitive," I have been realizing that this is still, in many ways, a rural Wesleyan church and many people want a more exhortive style of preaching. I think my preaching appeals more to the intellect and they are looking for more of an emotional response. I often end my sermons or services with an invitation to accept Christ, but I have often heard that we don't do it enough, that the appeals aren't strong enough.

While I am trying not to take these results personally, I can't help but still feel the sting a bit. Jennifer and I have been talking long and hard about our future here at Creekside. While we enjoy our home, our neighbors, the community we live in, we are very unhappy at our church. We feel like we don't connect with the majority of the congregation and are not sure what to do about that. This year has really made me question my gifts, abilities, and calling. This has easily been the most difficult ministry position I have ever held and the most stressful year of my life.

We have started to put out my résumé to some churches that have positions to fill. In many ways I feel like I have failed here. I came in wanting to help grow this church, and this year has been nothing but a constant struggle to keep the place afloat. Instead of growing, we have barely been holding our ground. I have been doing everything I know

how to do to keep the church going, but with our constant financial struggles, the high number of hurting people in the church, and the small core of healthy, mature Christians who are willing and able to serve and minister, it has been difficult to make any progress. We have, in fact, lost ground. I feel like the church is in worse shape than when we got here. I am beginning to feel that as much as the church doesn't fit the community it is in, we don't fit the church.

May 26, 2001, Saturday—A bit of good news: we finally closed yesterday on the old church building. It is sold and out of our hands. We walked away with about \$18,000 to put in the bank. That will help us pay between one half and two thirds of our outstanding bills. That is a huge help.

Last night we had a special Board meeting to discuss the terms of the sale of our building to Pastor Ware's church as well as the terms of leasing to them before the sale, and then us leasing from them after the sale. We hammered out a lot of details on each of those three issues. Pastor Ware wants the church as-is, completely furnished. We are willing to do this for the right price. We walked through the church, though, and made a list of things that are absolutely not for sale, otherwise, he can have it all and we will buy all new equipment for our new location.

At the closing yesterday, I also discussed with our realtor the terms of the leases and sale to Pastor Ware. RK will present it all to Ware's realtor; he said it looked like a good deal.

May 31, 2001, Friday—Had a two-hour meeting last night with Pastor Ware, his realtor, and a bunch of his people, and the same on our side. We talked through, face to face, all of the terms of the proposed two leases and sale of the property. It was a very amicable meeting and I think the two churches should be able to get along just fine. They

want to begin renting from us right away, so their first worship service in our building will be on June 10.

I have come to this conclusion about my position here at Creekside: I will not be here much longer, probably not through the end of summer. I will be quite content to leave knowing that we have taken the church from being a financial disaster to making them completely solvent and liquid with zero debt and between 800-900 thousand dollars in the bank (assuming the sale of the building goes through this summer). The church will not be homeless, they will be able to continue to meet in this building for as long as they like and until they find the right place to relocate, and they will have plenty of money in the bank.

The stress of this job is getting to be too much. I don't enjoy going to work, I don't enjoy going to worship on Sunday. I am beginning to resent the church and the people for getting me into this mess and putting my family at risk. I feel like I was lied to (or at least greatly misled) during the interview process. The church is in many ways not at all what was presented to me. I am tired of living week to week not knowing if I am going to be getting a paycheck, of dealing with realtors, bankers, and lawyers, and of the constant stream of dysfunctional people and the lack of resources to begin to help them. I am just tired of working to solve someone else's problems. I guess that really sums it up. This whole year has been spent dealing with the problems that the previous pastor left behind, and I am sick of it. If they were problems that I had made, or that I had known about coming into the job, fine, I could deal with that and feel responsible. But they are not my problems, I did not make them, I did not know about them, and I honestly don't care if they get solved. I want to be in a church that has more than a couple of healthy families, where my wife doesn't worry for my safety everyday, where we can enjoy

going to worship and look forward to seeing the people who will be there, where we are not concerned about sending our children to the nursery (Jen absolutely refuses) or children's church, and where I feel like I am making a contribution to the Kingdom of God, not just putting out fires all the time.

June 4, 2001, Monday—Yesterday was a disaster. Dad was here for a visit and came to church with us (we do not enjoy bringing guests to church—ain't that a sad state of affairs?). We were supposed to have an all-church summer kick-off picnic after church. The weather didn't cooperate: it was cold, dark, and windy. The picnic organizers were insisting that everyone eat outside and that no one should eat in the fellowship hall. Well that made more than a few people mad, including a family with a sick one-year-old who, justifiably, didn't want to take their sick baby out in the cold. There was a bit of an argument over that which ended with me having to talk to this tearful woman in her car and try and persuade her to not leave the church (for good). On top of that, it was Beau's birthday, so we weren't too keen on staying any longer than we had to anyway. The whole picnic broke up early and was just a big mess.

I have been waking up every morning with a stomachache and a feeling of dread that just covers me. I have to start the day with three or four Tums just to settle my stomach. I think I'm getting depressed. I hate my job, I can't stand the church. Fortunately, I have a great family and they are the ones keeping me sane. Going home after work is the best part of the day (which it always is, but now it is my lifeline to sanity). I have to get out of the office a couple of times a day and just drive around. It clears my head a little. I can't stop thinking about the problems at work. Even if I can distract myself for a while at home, the minute I finish doing whatever I'm doing, my mind goes back to work and this horrible feeling of stress, nausea, and dread comes over

me. This is getting serious. I need to get out of here before it does some permanent damage. I am really beginning to question whether I should be in ministry at all, if I am a total failure at what I do?

June 6, 2001, Wednesday—Okay, this has been a really bad week, and it's only Wednesday. On Monday, Paul Byer, our worship leader came in and told me he and his wife are quitting. They have accepted a job at another church. This is good news and bad news. The good part is: he is a terrible worship leader (at least for our style of worship) and this will just save me from having to fire him later. The bad news is: starting July 1 we no longer have a worship leader, bass player, or pianist. The talent pool at this church is a millimeter deep. We are in serious trouble. I wanted to fire Paul, but after we had found somebody to replace him. Now the pressure is on to find another worship leader, and replace half of the band. Great, more stress.

On Tuesday, John Yohman called; he and Jackie run our children's church program, and said he and Jackie were taking the summer off. Again, this is good and bad. Good, because they need a break. They do way too much themselves and don't get enough help. They are great workers but terrible coordinators. Bad, because it puts the pressure on to fill those teaching slots all summer. We have been working on recruiting more people to help them, but it has not been going well. I ordered curriculum that afternoon for the summer quarter. That was the easy part. Now to find people to teach it. Great, more stress.

Also, on Monday, got a call from Jacques Euyouk. He is an African from Cameroon who came to the States last summer. He is a strong Christian and an educated young man, but struggling to make some money and go to school here. We worked all fall and winter to get the paper work done to get his wife Miriam a visa to come here. She

arrived just a month ago. She is on a three-year visa. I just learned a week ago that he was on a 6 or 9-month visa. Either way, it has expired and he is now an illegal alien. Anyway, got a call from him Monday; he is in the hospital, might have tuberculosis. Great. He has helped in the nursery from time to time. Anybody know the number for the CDC?

Also received a note on Monday that Barbara Monk, an older woman in the church, is leaving. Need to call her and find out why. We have talked before, and she doesn't like the worship style, and not interested in moving with the church.

I think I'm going to quit. I have fantasies about it. I don't care if I don't have a job to go to. I can do any kind of work. Anything is better than this nut house. Stomach still hurts all the time. It's all I can do to keep smiling for my kids. The stress is definitely showing at home. I'm tense all the time, can't relax and play with the kids, get upset over stupid stuff.

June 8, 2001, Friday—This was easily the worst week of my life. Thank God for a loving supportive wife who still believes in me. She keeps telling me that the mess at church is not my fault, that we are going to leave the place better than we found it, that I am doing a good job. Intellectually, I can agree with her. I have helped the church. I have solved some major problems, although we have a few more to go. I hope I'm going to be able to move them from being a financial disaster to completely solvent and secure. I've been able to sell some property (worth \$400,000), lower the amount of debt, cut our mortgage rate in half (from almost \$9000 to about \$4400), pay some overdue bills (although new ones are already piling high), and deal with some issues in the church. Emotionally, though, I feel like a failure. If I'm doing such a good job, why are people leaving, why aren't people bringing their friends, why aren't we growing? Jen keeps

saying some day we'll look back on this year and laugh, and think about all we learned, and have fond memories of a very hard year. Maybe. But I'm not laughing yet.

I have been sending résumés all over the country from ads on Willow Creek's Exchange. We have a few interesting leads. Our favorite is a big church in Peoria that is looking for a teaching pastor. The job description sounds perfect. I made it past the first round of cuts and filled out a very long and detailed questionnaire. Now we just have to wait. I think I'm not cut out for being a senior pastor, at least not yet. I'm back to thinking, like we did all through the Beeson year, that I'd like to be on staff at a large church where I can gain some experience, grow, and see how it's done right. Then, maybe I'll take my own church again, or maybe not. I'm not sure I'm wired to handle the stress and headaches of total leadership. I don't mind being in a supportive role with plenty of responsibilities.

June 11, 2001, Monday—Had our regular monthly Board meeting last night. It was all I could do not to say the words "I quit." We discussed the survey results—no big surprises there. They didn't have much to say. We're not sure what to do next. I'm really at a loss for how to continue my dissertation project. Hope this doesn't mean I have to start all over from scratch with a whole new dissertation. We also discussed some other church business. Everyone is excited about Ware's church meeting in our building (they were having their worship service during our meeting), and the prospect of them buying the whole thing. We talked about getting the relocation committee going. We also discussed other families who are leaving the church: the Weatheralls (older couple, very nice, like them a lot; don't care for the style of worship) and the Roses (woman who got upset at the picnic, is leaving). I need to call them both.

June 13, 2001, Wednesday—Made some phone calls last night to folks who are talking about leaving. All of them like us but either don't like the style of worship, aren't interested in relocating (would probably be too far for them to drive) or whatever. Patty Rose just has some serious personal conflicts with people. She has a strong personality herself. I encouraged her to talk personally with the people she is having trouble with, don't know if she will. I also called some folks about helping with children's church and found out one family is shopping for a new church. They have three kids and while they like us and like the worship services, they feel like there isn't enough here for them or their kids, and they can't afford to wait five years while things grow. Major bummer. I can understand it when the older folks don't like it, but when we start losing young families, we are really in trouble.

June 14, 2001, Thursday—Well, I knew this week was going too well (aside from the phone calls a night or two ago). I called RK this morning to check on our lease with AFS (they want to rent more warehouse space from us—a good thing, but, boy, am I getting tired of being a landlord). He said he had just hung up the phone with Pastor Ware's realtor, and they are not going to be able to get financing. In other words the sale just fell through. I asked if they would be able to secure financing through another bank, and RK said that they had used a mortgage broker (who can shop at any bank) and that securing financing for our amount would be very difficult (i.e., impossible). So it looks like the sale to Pastor Ware is dead.

Once again, bad news, good news. Bad: no sale, no money, no move. Good: (and this shows you how skewed my perspective has gotten) no sale means our financial plight continues, the church may not be able to afford to keep me, and I can leave with less guilt.

I need to write a memo to the Board and let them know what is going on. They will not be happy.

Cindy, my awesome new secretary, has been on vacation these first two weeks of June. Can't wait until she gets back Monday.

June 21, 2001, Thursday—Having a nice week with the Reinhillers, Beeson friends. They are here for the week from South Dakota. It has been great to see them, talk with them, and share stories about our churches. They are very encouraging and understand how rotten the situation at our church is and could be that way. Had a birthday party for their daughter Ann on Wednesday.

We put our house on the market a week or so ago and we've been having showings all week—almost one a day. A guy came though yesterday who seemed pretty serious and needs it pretty quick. We'll see.

June 24, 2001, Sunday—Managed to get through church this morning. The service was actually pretty good, communion and good-byes for the Byers. Right after church we ran up to Ashland to spend the afternoon with the Bilkerts and Reinhillers. Thank God for good friends! They have really helped us through this difficult time.

June 25, 2001, Monday—What a rotten day. Got a call about 10am, it was Bob Aspel, the vicechair of the Board. He said he wanted me to know what was going on so that I didn't hear things through the rumor mill. The Board is going to have a meeting to discuss the current situation at the church, and they don't want me to be there. Some people don't feel comfortable discussing things in front of me. He said they want to discuss how committed they are to making this church work. I asked him how much of it was really about me. He backpedaled and tried to make it sound like I wasn't the issue, but that they have to adjust to a different leadership style, someone who doesn't do

everything himself. Bob also mentioned that one thing people had mentioned was that they had heard a lot of good ideas from me, but not a lot of follow through. In my own defense, that's because most good ideas take people and money to make them happen, and we happen to be out of both.

Anyway, that phone call pretty much ruined my day. Being the highly people-oriented, approval-seeking person I am, that was really bad news. Not that it really changed anything. It's good that they see how bad things are getting and want to discuss it candidly. But I think the writing is on the wall, I'm going to quit soon. I didn't call Jen and tell her about the phone call until mid-afternoon. When I got home we just cried together. What a miserable mess we are in. We feel so hopeless and lost.

To make it worse, we have a surprise dinner tonight for the Byers, our worship leaders who just had their last Sunday with us yesterday. We have to go to church tonight and put on happy faces when we are really miserable inside.

The only thing that saved us was just before we headed back for church we got a phone call from our realtor. We have another offer on the house—same guys as last week, but better money. Maybe God does love us after all, and will help us get out of here soon!

I sent an e-mail to Dale Galloway today, letting him know what our situation is and to keep us in mind as he hears about openings in different churches.

The dinner went okay. Nice meal together and then prayer time with the whole worship team. We then did some singing together for one last time. Jen was very patient.

Oh, by the way, happy 13th anniversary to Jen and me! What a way to spend it.

June 26, 2001, Tuesday—Okay, God is good, all the time; and all the time, God is good. Got to work this morning and had a heart to heart talk with my secretary. She

knew I was feeling bad and she said my face has changed over the last few weeks. I told her about the Board meeting, and she said she had overheard a couple of people talking—nothing serious. She totally disagrees with them though, and thinks I'm great.

Spent quite a long time in the prayer room this morning. Prayed for hope and direction, asked forgiveness for trying to lead a self-directed life and asked God to make me totally Spirit-directed. As I was praying, I was trying to think and ask God why this situation is so stressful for me, and why I don't feel any commitment to making it work and sticking it out. I think we just don't fit with the people and community. We have no sense of connection. I prayed that God would make it clear if it was time for us to leave or somehow totally change my heart towards the church.

Went back to the office and received a call from Dale Galloway. Dale was great! Very kind and understanding. Chatted about Columbus and where my church is located. Said he got my e-mail and was sorry to hear things were so rough. He said he had just been talking to a former Beeson pastor who had just accepted a job at Skyline Wesleyan as the exec pastor, and he needed to find a Gen X pastor. Would I mind him passing my name along? I said definitely not!

Half-hour later I got a call from Lou Shirey. He was in the Beeson class before mine, retired army chaplain. We had a great conversation. He had just accepted his position and had not even officially started yet, but he thought it was great we'd made the connection. Garlow told him his first job would be to find a young adult pastor. How great if he could do it before he even started! I said I'd e-mail him my stuff and he said he'd pass it along to Garlow. WOW! God is good!

Then, Jen called and said we'd just sold our house. The negotiations went through and we came to an agreement! We close July 13, and they get possession July 23! That is

quick and more than a little scary. Maybe God is working everything out just perfectly. I can't imagine we'll be able to interview at Skyline and be accepted in the position in 3 weeks, but who knows? Even if the Skyline job doesn't work out, it is good to know God still cares and is looking out for us! Praise the Lord!!!

I feel like a ton of stress has been lifted off my shoulders! There's still some there, but I can now see the light at the end of the tunnel. I don't know if I'll quit my job and we'll be homeless and unemployed (at my parents' lake house) for a while, or if I'll ship off Jen and the kids to the lake, and finish out the summer here, or what. Lots of questions, few answers, but lots of excitement.

July 4, 2001, Wednesday—What a week it has been! Let me recap a few of the highlights...

Wednesday, June 27—Had lunch with Kerrie Obert (programming director). We talked about the next couple of worship services, our need for musicians, a worship leader, etc. She asked how we are doing and I was pretty open about how hard the year has been, especially the last few months. I told her about the Board meeting and she understood how hurt I could feel. She was very reassuring, though, and admitted that I had inherited a very bad situation, and that I was doing as well as anyone could possibly do. We daydreamed for a while about taking a few of the strong, healthy families and starting all over.

Went home that night and started packing—pulling out boxes from the attic, sorting through junk in the basement, putting stuff in boxes. It feels really good, but weird. Jen and I have been praying fervently for God to open the right doors and make his leading plain and clear. While we are trying to be faithful, I feel like we are about to take a huge leap off a cliff with a bungee cord, and we don't know if we are going to

bounce back and be okay, or if the cord is going to snap. As we've been talking and praying, we've realized that this is easily the biggest step of faith we have ever taken (selling our home and resigning without a job to go to or a place to live), but it is when we take big steps of faith that God can do the biggest miracles. So we are trusting him, and continuing to step out in faith with the belief that we are doing what He wants us to do.

Thursday, June 28—Had lunch with Bob Aspel, vicechair of the Board. Bob and I get along well, and we had a good talk. He told me some of the concerns they had discussed at their pre-Board meeting on Tuesday—need for a mid-week service, concerns over a few families leaving, and such. I would have really been concerned if I didn't know I was leaving. It was hard not to tell him then and there. I didn't though, because I was hoping to have a definite job lead before announcing it. I also want to see what the Board will do at their meeting and how active a role they are willing to take in really leading the church. Lunch was pleasant, but tense and a bit awkward. Bob asked to get together next week to discuss the private Board meeting before our next regular Board meeting on July 8. I'll have to tell him then that I'm resigning.

Friday and Saturday, June 29 & 30—Spent both days packing the house, putting stuff in boxes we don't need or can live without for a year or more (hmmm, just like Beeson). We know it's a long shot, but we keep thinking that if Skyline comes through, we're going to have to sell everything, get down to bare basics, and get a tiny apartment in San Diego. We're okay with that. A year ago we had the same opportunity and couldn't do it. Now though, we've had a year with a big house, a lot of stuff, and a big yard, and while all of that is really nice, we've decided we can live without a lot of it.

More stuff just means more to take care of. No word from Skyline. We'll give them until Monday before we try to make another contact.

Friday evening we had a Family Night at church—games for the kids, drive-in style movie at dusk. Great idea, poor timing. Lots of people out of town, only a couple of families showed up for the family time, so that was a disaster. Good turn-out for the movie, but I felt really weird knowing the Board was meeting the next day. I hung out with Brian Morris once they arrived we had an enjoyable evening together.

Sunday, July 1—Church was hard. I felt like people were looking at us, talking about us. I could hardly preach—felt like I was having an out-of-body experience. Attendance was poor. Talked with Bob Aspel briefly after church, the Board met for four hours Saturday! We're going to get together Tuesday.

Actually had a fairly nice lunch after church. Everyone went to Fuddruckers (our Lunch Bunch place of the week). We sat with the Heizmans—our kids enjoy each other, and we like them a lot (one of the families we'll really miss). Went home that afternoon and did two things: 1) e-mailed Lou Shirey with a follow-up to our phone conversation asking him lots of questions about the position, timeline for hiring, and such, and 2) wrote my letter of resignation. I think I have to give it to Bob on Tuesday, before he starts to tell me about the Board meeting; it's only fair.

Checked e-mail late that night before bed, received a note from Lou. He was very encouraging and was able to answer almost all my questions. He doesn't start at Skyline until July 21 himself, and it's not his job to hire, but a good recommendation doesn't hurt. It sure sounds good, but all we can do now is wait for a call from Skyline. It would sure be nice to get a call before Tuesday so I can say that we have somewhere we're going, not that we are just quitting.

Monday, July 2—Wrote two big e-mails this morning: 1) to my dissertation committee, informing them of my situation and impending departure. I asked if it would be permissible to turn my year-long study into a seven-eight month study in light of the situation. Got several quick, positive, and supportive replies. That really helps a lot!!! 2) to all our Beeson family. Same basic content with more details, asking for prayer.

Had lunch with Mom and Dad. They were coming through town on their way home from Colorado. We had a really nice lunch and they are so supportive of us. I told Dad we feel kind of crazy quitting a job without a new one in mind. He said it's not so crazy at all, and that he'd done the same thing himself. He said it's not worth staying at a job that you can't enjoy going to every day. Man, what a relief, to know he understands and is supportive. They can't wait for us to come out to the lake house. They know we might be there for some time while we regroup, work on dissertation, and find a job. We're actually really looking forward to spending some time there with them! Mom may also need surgery soon, so it might be perfect timing to be able to be there and help out, without job needs and concerns pulling at us.

Went home and packed some more that night. Sorted out stuff for garage sale this weekend. No word from Skyline. Don't know if we should sell all our furniture, or just small stuff. I meet with Bob tomorrow. I will resign. Praying about how to do that gently but firmly.

Tuesday, July 3—It was hard to concentrate at work this morning—keep thinking and praying about how to tell Bob. Checked e-mail, half a dozen notes from Beeson friends wishing us well and praying for us. Further confirmation from Dissertation committee that it's okay to make the changes.

Had lunch with Bob about 12:30p. Dropped the resignation bomb pretty quickly. He took it well. Disappointed but understood. He said that this was what the board had hoped to avoid. Nice to hear, but way too little, way too late. We talked about the board meeting a little bit, but I don't really care. I told him it was good that the board was finally waking up and taking some ownership of the situation. I guessed that previously they really knew nothing of what was going on at the church and that Pastor Mark just ran it all—he said I was right. We went back to my office to talk about the agenda for Sunday's Board meeting. I just want to get in and out, and let them deal with what they have to do. Bob's going to call them all and let them know of my resignation.

At home about 5pm the phone rings, its Skyline!!! Terry Pelham, woman who does young adult stuff now. We talked for an hour and a half. Great conversation; she is a very smart, sharp woman! What a loss to Skyline that she's leaving (husband took a job at Indiana Wesleyan U.). Anyway, we got to talk and share about our respective churches and situations. Skyline having best attendance and giving ever but has some staff holes that need to be filled. She seemed really impressed with me and we both enjoyed the conversation. Too bad we won't get to work together. She was amazed to hear about our recent steps of faith—selling the house, resigning today—and thinks God is really working in our lives. She asked if we'd be willing to hop on a plane in the next week or two and I said we'd get on one tomorrow. She was impressed. She said Jim Garlow was coming back to town tomorrow and she would talk to him about our conversation. She thought he was talking to someone on his trip about this position, but that they need several pastoral positions filled so that was no big deal (I think she really wants us to come out there). She said we should get a call by the end of the week either from herself, Jim, or somebody scheduling a plane flight for us.

What a change in demeanor for us! From despondent to ecstatic! What a great night to have the Laws and Bilkerts over! Everyone stayed until 10pm, talking, laughing, and the kids playing hard. It was hard for our friends though. They are genuinely excited for us, but sad that we might be leaving. It breaks our hearts too. Our friendships with the Laws and Bilkerts are what have kept us sane and grounded through this year. They have loved us and supported us every step along the way, through all the difficult, trying times. They have been a tremendous source of encouragement and fun all along the way. I don't know what we would have done here without them. Thank God He put us close together for this year. We love and care for them so much. Leaving them will be the hardest thing we have to do. I know there will be lots of tears. We joked about them all moving out to California with us and working at Skyline together.

How good God is. While it's nowhere near a done deal, Skyline sure looks good. It will be a major challenge, but I'm ready for it, I hope. It is amazing to see how God has provided for us, and this is quite a lesson on faith. We believed we were following God's leading and will in selling our house and resigning our job, but it wasn't until all that had happened, that we had taken those steps of faith, that he really opened the door of hope. It was like the Israelites crossing the river when they had to step in and get their feet wet before the waters parted for them. God calls us to take steps of faith, even when they seem to defy logic or common sense, and then he makes the way clear! God is so good!

It is going to be very hard to be at church these next three weeks. Going to have to pray about that a lot.

So, it's 8:04am Wednesday morning, and I am so excited I can't sleep. We have a lot to do to pack up the house, get ready for the garage sale this weekend, and such. We'll have to wait and see if we need to put our stuff in storage for a while, or if a moving

company will pull up and take us to California. We're really going to jump now every time the phone rings—will it be despondent friends from church, angry (maybe?) Board members, someone from Skyline? Lots of questions: Will we fly out there before the 22nd? Will Jim like me (Terry thinks so very much)? Will I get the job? Can I handle the job? Will we go straight there or to the lake house? What am I going to preach these next weeks? How are we going to say good-bye to everyone (the thought of a church farewell party makes me sick, it will be more like a bad funeral)?

I am so excited I could jump out of my skin!! Suddenly a sense of joy and excitement has returned to my life that I haven't felt for a long time!

July 6, 2001, Friday—Had phone interview last night with Jim Garlow. It did not go well. He called about 11:30pm, I had been asleep for an hour. Talking with Jim was quite a reality check. He asked lots of questions about the churches I've served in, their size and staff—obviously checking out my experience (or lack of it) in a large church. He said they normally won't even consider anyone who hasn't had experience in a church of at least 1200. He was very nice and very affirming, said I had tremendous skills and talent, much of it probably untapped. He said he was concerned about my lack of experience, that Skyline could be overwhelming. I was feeling overwhelmed just talking to him and getting a sense of what they want a pastor to do. The conversation ended nicely and he said someone would be in touch.

I got off the phone and Jen, who was listening to my side of the conversation, said, "There's no way we're going there." She could tell the job was way too big, expectations unreasonable. I have to agree, I may be a quick learner, but I think I would be totally overwhelmed out there. That would not be good for me or the church. Went to bed totally exhausted, too tired to worry.

This morning we had our garage sale. Feeling totally depressed that our best job lead just blew up. Time to regroup again. Wish we hadn't called all our friends and told them about Skyline.

Just after lunch got a call from New Hope Community Church in Durham, NC. Guy from search committee wanting to set up a phone interview! We talked for a while and it sounds like a good possibility. Church is 7 years old, running about 120, looking for a pastor for 13 months, founding pastor left to start retreat ministry in CO, mostly white collar professionals, totally outreach oriented/seeker friendly. We'll do the interview Tuesday evening. We talked for a little while, sounds promising.

Two minutes after I hung up the phone with New Hope, Terry Pelham from Skyline called. She was very affirming, again (we really hit it off, even talked and laughed about how well we hit it off and how you can tell right away when an interview or candidating weekend is not going to go well), but said Jim did have some concerns about my level of experience. We are not totally closing the door but want to slow things down (i.e., not flying out next weekend). I told her we agreed wholeheartedly and how much of what Jim outlined in the job sounded so unreasonable. She agreed, said if you give Jim an inch, he'll take a mile. So, we had a very nice chat, agreed to keep in touch, and Terry said she would do some more poking around for us for jobs; she has a lot of connections and really wants us to find a great place (she suggested Willow Creek!—out of the frying pan, into the fire!). What a great woman—she is going to do (more) great things for God.

Called the Laws, went to their place for dinner, had a wonderful evening with them. It's good to have good friends.

July 10, 2001, Tuesday—This past Sunday was rough. Announced my resignation at the end of the church service. I think about half the people already knew. There were a few surprised faces. Some tears. Then met with the Board Sunday evening. They had some issues to talk through about the resignation. They were not happy—upset that I was quitting, upset that I didn't give them more notice, upset that I hadn't said anything earlier about how I was feeling. I just sat and took it. Didn't say much in reply, wouldn't have helped the situation. I told them about the change in my dissertation, 12 month study to 6 month study. I can start writing chapters 4 and 5 right away. I need to find a statistician to crunch some numbers for me.

Phone interview with New Hope went well. Called at 6pm and talked for almost two hours. Talked with 8-10 people from their Leadership and Search Teams. I hate having to try to explain what happened here at Creekside, but we started with that and moved on from there. Again, it seemed to go well and like we share a common vision and direction in ministry. Early in the conversation, as I was explaining why we were leaving Creekside, I said how much I had been praying about it and Jennifer and I had been praying together, and I felt released from my ministry at Creekside and that God was moving us on to something new. Well, I think this was key because later on they were explaining why it has taken them 13 months to find a new pastor and they said they had a couple of candidates come in that they liked, but when they invited them to be their pastor, the guys turned them down saying they didn't feel "released" from their current ministry. So New Hope knows I'm released and ready to go.

Well, I guess the interview did go well—just checked my e-mail at about 10:30pm and there was a note from Joel Hughes saying that they wanted us to come down and candidate! So I guess we're going to North Carolina the weekend of July 27-

29—the weekend after my last weekend at Creekside. Now I just have to figure out what to preach.

July 17, 2001, Tuesday—It's going to be a hard two weeks before we get out of here. Most people are sad to see us go but understand completely. Many have come up to us or called us and said they are sorry to see us go but are more sorry for the mess we got ourselves into. They apologize profusely for the mess the church is in and that I wasn't told how bad it was before we came. We're now doing a juggling act of trying to have a semi-normal homelife as we pack up the house, have some last moments with friends from church, the community, and Beeson. We will miss them all, but the hardest part will be moving away from the Bilkerts and Laws—thinking about that is the only time I want to cry.

I'm busy at work too. Lots of loose ends to tie up—especially making sure everyone is up to date on all the real estate and rental stuff. I'm also writing two sermons at once—one for this Sunday (doing the last five parts of the beatitudes all at once) and one for New Hope (Church as a Trauma Center) because I probably won't have much time to work on it the week before we go. I'm also doing lunch with a different person every day this week—last chance to talk with people before we go.

July 24, 2001, Tuesday—What a crazy busy weekend! To summarize, we finished packing up our house and my office, put everything in storage (had friends and family from all over the country helping), had our last Sunday at Creekside, and moved in with my parents in northeast Ohio.

Church on Sunday was difficult, as would be expected. On the one hand it was hard to say good-bye to many people, but on the other hand, I was glad to be leaving.

During the service they had a little good-bye ceremony for us and gave us a beautiful framed picture. I preached my last sermon at Creekside.

After the worship service, there was a little potluck supper that most folks stayed for. Most people were very nice and very sad to see us go. Again, many expressed much appreciation for all we did for the church, and apologies for getting us into such a mixed up situation. On the other hand, some of the board members could hardly look at us during church and didn't stay for dinner. Oh well.

After church we went home, changed clothes, and made one last trip to the storage unit with all our last minute stuff. About 4pm we had finished packing up the cars and we headed out of town. And thus ended our time at Creekside Community Church.

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